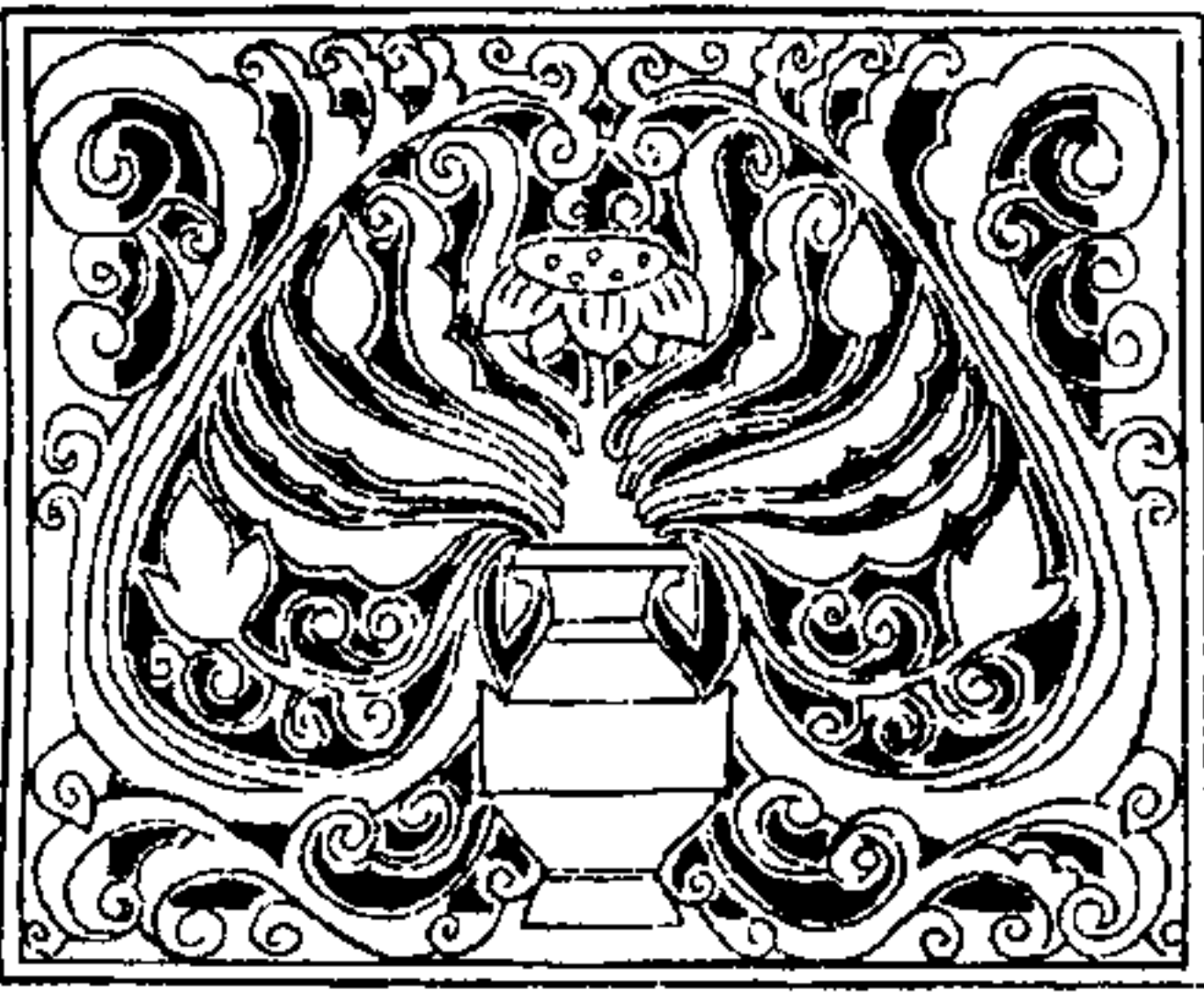




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*A Monthly Journal of Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

JULY 2000

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Please visit our web site at www.advaitaonline.com

Rates of Subscription

	Annual	3 Years	20 Years	Patron (25 Yrs)
India & Nepal	Rs. 60	Rs. 170	Rs 600	Rs. 1500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs.180	Rs. 500	Rs. 2500	Rs. 5000
U.S.A. & Canada	US \$ 20	\$ 60	\$ 300	\$ 600
Other Countries	U.K.£ 15	£ 45	£ 225	£ 500

Names of patron subscribers are published in Prabuddha Bharata

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 105

JULY 2000

No. 7

VEDIC PRAYERS

यजिष्ठं त्वा यजमाना हुवेम ज्येष्ठमङ्गिरसां
विप्र मन्मभिर्विप्रेभिः शुक्र मन्मभिः ।
परिज्मानमिव द्यां होतारं चर्षणीनां ।
शोचिष्केशं वृषणं यमिमा विशः प्रावन्तु जूतये विशः ॥
—Rg Veda, 1.127.2

त्वमग्रे सहसा सहन्तमः शुश्रिन्तमसो
जायसे देवतातये रयिर्न देवतातये ।
शुश्रिन्तमसो हि ते मदो द्युश्रिन्तम उत क्रतुः ।
अऋ स्मा ते परि चरन्त्यजर श्रुष्टीवानो नाजर ॥
—Rg Veda, 1.127.9

O luminous and radiant Agni! We are the performers of sacrifice and you are the best deity to whom offerings are made; so we offer our oblations to you. You are the best of the Angiras. That is, yours is the best splendour. We adore you with mantras which are especially pleasing to you. You move about everywhere; you spread out like the hair and pour out grace in plenty. We welcome you for the good of humanity. May all sacrificers adore you only.

O Agni! You with your might vanquish enemies. You are extremely resplendent. Just as wealth comes for the sake of gods and sacrifices, you are born of wood for the benefit of gods. Your happiness at receiving our oblations is immense. Your deeds too are magnanimous. O immortal Agni, you remove distress of mortals. The principal sacrificers, through their chants, seek to please you always, just as by sweet words people please the king. O Agni, though you appear to be very near to us, shining on the sacrificial altar in front of us, you eat with the gods.

Ideals Then and Now

EDITORIAL

A Dedicated Life

At last, that day sage Vachaspati had completed writing his great commentary on the first four aphorisms of the *Brahma Sūtras*. He put aside the leaf on which he wrote the last word. The sage was so glad he could complete the task. It was somewhat dark in his hermitage. He lifted his eyes. To his astonishment, he saw a middle-aged lady standing in front of him. 'Who are you?' asked Vachaspati. The lady became shy. She didn't answer. Slowly, however, things became clear. Slowly the sage understood.

Oh! What a horrible inadvertence! The sage cursed himself for his mistake. Vachaspati remembered now that he was married when he was young. He remembered now that he had a wife. Things became clear soon. Who was it that washed his clothes daily? Who was it that provided food to him everyday? Who was it that served him so well all these years, when he was immersed in the thought of Brahman? Who was it that took care of the numerous sacred leaves on which he wrote the commentary, threw away, again wrote? In his meditation on Brahman, in his meditation on the complexities of the *sūtras*, he had completely forgotten that he had a wife.

With immense pain and a sense of shame, Vachaspati told that lady, his wife, with folded hands: 'I'm so very sorry. I was totally oblivious of the world. You have served me so well. But for you, I couldn't have written this work. May I know your name, please?' It was after years that she was speaking perhaps. It was after years that her venerable husband was talking to her, or even looking at her perhaps. The lady was extremely shy to tell her name even, but somehow managed to say, 'Bhamati.' That was it. The sage took a palm leaf; on it he wrote the name 'Bhamati' in bold

letters. That would be the name of his work. That was his way of showing his gratitude to his all-suffering wife. The book, and so his wife's name, have become immortal.

Impossible to believe, but they say it happened. This was the ancient India of all-suffering women and men. This was the great India where lived thousands and thousands of noble souls, giving their lives entirely to some ideals. While a few such lives are known, most are hidden in obscurity. These people cared little for food, shelter, clothing, and enjoyments. All they cared for were their life's ideals. Women would be ready to suffer in order to make their husbands achieve their goals. And what after all was a little human love when, by remaining faithful and sincere wives, by showing divine, pure love, they would attain the highest peace and joy, which no earthly love would bring? By leading an ordinary householder's life like everyone else, Bhamati would perhaps have died an unknown wife like everyone else. But, owing to her dedication, devotion to her husband, and following the principles of Indian womanhood, she became immortal. And the love she received thenceforth was far purer and greater than all that the earthly ones could give.

Instances From Ancient Days

We know about sage Kanada; he had nothing to eat and so would collect a few grains that would have fallen near fields and eat them. That was his food. But he was the father of Nyaya philosophy!

The story of Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi, found in the fifth section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, is yet another example of the greatness of Indian womanhood. When Yajnavalkya decided to renounce the world, he called Maitreyi and told her that he would distribute all his wealth between his two wives. Maitreyi

asked him, 'Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that, or not?' 'No,' replied Yajnavalkya, 'your life will be just like that of people who possess plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth.' The wise and great Maitreyi then asked, 'What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?'

Indian history is replete with innumerable instances of noble householders. It's impossible to quote them all here. We shall present only a few select ones. Take the instance of Rama. On the very morning on which he was to be coronated, when everything was ready for making him the crown-prince of a vast country, he heard that he had to go to the jungle. The common reaction would be to fight for one's rightful place. But, in order to keep his father's promise, Rama took the impossible decision of giving up everything, and retired to the jungle. Though a palace-bred girl, Sita too was instantly ready to follow in her husband's footsteps. No one could stop her from doing that. In spite of her immaculate purity, though Rama tested her on several occasions, Sita remained an ideal wife, obeying Rama always. Today Sita remains the supreme ideal of womanhood.

The *Mahābhārata* is a huge collection of stories of ideal people. There are numerous lives, each great and perfect in its own place, presented in this epic poem. Of them, we should remember Savitri who brought back her husband Satyavan from the jaws of death; Gandhari who chose to remain blind because her husband was blind; Shakuntala who reminded her husband Dushyanta about herself; Damayanti the wife of Nala; the extraordinary Arundhati, the wife of sage Vasistha. The story of Rantideva in the *Mahābhārata* is an instance of a householder's unswerving service to humanity. The great devotee Ambarisha is an outstanding example of devotion. How he fasted on *ekādaśī* days, how the sage Durvasa got angry, how owing to his devotion Ambarisha won him over are all legends today.

There is a wonderful example of devotion to the husband in Sukanya's episode. Sukanya was a certain king's only daughter. Once, while playing in the woods with her friends, she saw a huge anthill. There were two tiny holes in the anthill and inside it were two shining objects. Out of girlish innocence Sukanya took a sharp stick and pierced those shining objects. Sadly for her, those shining objects were nothing but the two eyes of Sage Chyavana, who was performing austerities there since a long time. Sukanya was terrified and returned home. She never told about the incident to anyone. But though the sage didn't curse anyone for his misfortune, nature herself became angry on account of her dear son's fate. The people of the country began to suffer immensely. A delegation came to the king, seeking solution. After enquiries, the cause of suffering led to somebody's having troubled the noble sage. He went to the sage and came to know what had happened to him. Soon Sukanya confessed her mistake. The king sought the sage's pardon. But the sage said that he would pardon Sukanya if the king gave her in marriage to him. The stunned king had to oblige. An old, blind sage and a princess were married. But Sukanya was never unhappy. She gladly went on serving Chyavana with one-pointed devotion. One day, the Ashvinikumaras, the divine twins and doctors of the gods, saw her. They wanted to test her purity and love for her husband. They said that they would make her husband young, and would restore his eyesight too; but on one condition. The twins and the sage would take a dip in the pond and get up. The three would then look alike. Sukanya should recognize her husband from amongst the three. Sukanya was glad that her husband's sight would return. She told Chyavana about Ashvinikumaras' test. He agreed. Owing to her purity of character, Sukanya recognized her husband, and her life thenceforward became more joyous.

The Ideal of the Householder

From the above instances, we can under-

stand how significant the householder's life is, and how difficult too is this path. The Hindu tradition divides life into four stages: the student stage (*brahmacarya*), the householder stage (*gārhasthya*), the withdrawal stage (*vānaprastha*) and the monastic stage (*sannyāsa*). Though there are four divisions, the principle is that at any stage, if one so wishes, one can become a monk. But the point is, no stage of life is meant for becoming engrossed in worldly enjoyments. All the stages are mere springboards to ascend higher, and the goal of everyone is to attain God or liberation. That is the plan of the Hindu way of life.

The householder is the linchpin of the social structure. All others—the novice, the monk, and the unmarried—depend upon the householder for their existence. Thus the householder's responsibility is stupendous in running the society smoothly. Hence our sages set grand ideals before the householder—through narratives, through parables, through stories. The householder has three main duties to perform, according to the Indian tradition. Such a person has to perform his or her daily duties (*nitya karma*), occasional duties (*naimittika karma*) and obligatory duties (*kāmya karma*). The daily duties are, (a) caring for one's household, neighbours, guests, animals, birds, etc; (b) worshipping God according to tradition; (c) giving the ancestors their due; etc. The occasional duties are, (a) following customary rituals where and when needed; (b) worshipping deities on their festive occasions; (c) performing duties related to forefathers; etc. The obligatory duties are those (like sacrifices etc) that help the householder become nobler and purer day by day so that he may advance towards the supreme end of life.

Scriptures also enumerate the householder's duties to be five. These are: *ahuta*, *huta*, *prahuta*, *brāhmyāhuta* and *prāśita*. To perform worship, meditate and repeat the names of God is called *ahuta*. To perform *pūjā*, sacrifices, etc is *huta*. To worship the Divine in lower living beings like animals and birds is

prahuta. To serve venerable people, the elderly, guests, etc properly is *brāhmyāhuta*. And to perform suitable rituals and show due respect to departed elders is *prāśita*. Our scriptures like the *Manu Samhitā* stress that the householder's prime duty is to follow his own natural duty (*svadharma*) and never to do things which are not righteous. It is the householder's duty to take proper care of his body. He should never overwork in order to make money. The householder is told never to be lazy, and he has various duties to perform from dawn to dusk.

Some up-to-the-minute people feel that our scriptures have become outdated; that their teachings to householders are all dated now and have no relevance at all. Instances cited above are mere stories, they feel. Indian tradition gives impossible ideals to follow, they believe.

Have traditional duties and customs of the householder become obsolete? Not at all. Swami Vivekananda says, '*Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society.*'¹ We should re-read ancient tradition in modern language. If the scriptures exhort the householder to perform sacrifices, it can be understood as serving the distressed. Natural calamities are frequent in today's world. If God is present in every being, the householder's sacrifice today would be to offer part of his earnings, his services, his intelligence, etc for the good of the society. This is indeed sacrifice of a different kind. So the ideals are the same but explanations and details may differ with time. The social structure might keep on changing, but the essential truths will remain the same. The ancient values of unselfishness, purity, nobility, etc in the householder can be easily practised even today, and there are numerous instances of such great men and women who

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 84.

have done and are doing so.

Examples from Recent Times

The landlord of Derepur was a ruthless fellow. His name was Ramananda Roy. He instituted a false case against a villager. And he told another gentleman of the same village, Kshudiram, to give evidence in his own favour. Kshudiram knew what would happen if he didn't give false evidence: he would lose his ancestral property, would have to leave the village and live under a tree. But still, he could not tell a lie. The unavoidable happened and a false case was instituted against Kshudiram too. He lost everything, became a pauper and left the village. His only faith was in the Lord, and the Lord placed his dear devotee in Kamarpukur, the village which is a pilgrim centre now. Some days later Sri Rama (Raghuvira) himself chose Kshudiram to worship him. Still later, Sri Ramakrishna was born in his hut. In spite of hardships, in spite of all troubles, Kshudiram went on worshipping God and praying to him. The village did not take long to recognize the saint in him. His wife too was pious and guileless. Is it in ordinary families that the Lord is born?

About her parents, Holy Mother Sarada Devi herself says, 'My father was a devout follower of Rama. He was very orthodox.... How kind my mother was, and how she would feed people, and how she took care of them! And how guileless she was!...Will the Lord be born where the parents are not self-composed?'²

Swami Vivekananda's parents were wonderful indeed. Bhuvaneswari Devi would teach her son, 'Remain pure all your life; guard your own honour and never transgress the honour of others. Be very tranquil, but when necessary, harden your heart.' That was how she herself lived too. Vivekananda's father was generous to a fault, and had a progressive outlook in social and religious matters.³ All

the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were blessed with noble parents who led simple, pure, devoted, and glorious lives.

The history of modern India is replete with the sacrifices of noble characters. The all-suffering Subhas Chandra Bose, Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, and a host of others are examples of ideal householders. They all lived to bring peace to others. They all cared little for their own selves. They all sacrificed everything for the sake of the ideal.

These were all special cases, you may say. But, in today's world, with life becoming so complex, is it possible to live such exemplary and God-centred lives? Is it possible to lead pure and holy lives in a corrupt society? Is it possible to follow the Vedic ideal and think that the householder's life is meant for the realization of God?

Some Modern Examples

She lives in a cosmopolitan city and works in a firm. She has children but has no one else in the house; her husband passed on long ago. She attends her office everyday and the rest of her time is devoted to serving people around. She has contacts with a few social service organizations and gives all her free time for them. Her house is a small one, but it is like a small temple. She prays and meditates at home, and spends the little free time she gets in reading holy books. Someone remarked to her, 'You never read newspapers? No TV? No cinema? No entertainment at all? You don't know what is happening around? Oh my God! Your name should be entered in the *Guinness Book*!'

He is a young businessman. He has an ideal and that is to live for the Truth. Several have been the tests he has had to face in life. There were times when wicked people tried to overcome him. Yet, the simple faith he has in God saves him from all calamities. When his

2. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 16.

3. Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived With Them* (St Louis: Vedanta Society, 1997), p. 20.

retailers tried to snub him once and also tried to implicate him on false charges, he went straight to the top man there, spoke to him and that gentleman was convinced of the sincerity and truthfulness of this person. Out of the money he gets, he spends what is extra in service. His free time is given to others. And he is unmarried. He is a happy man. Contentment bursts out of his face.

The husband and wife were both in very big positions in life. It was on their intelligence that certain vital sectors of the country's development programme depended. They worked hard and helped India achieve success in their field. Their house, however, wasn't a house but a monastery. There was nothing worldly there. The locality gained immensely—culturally, religiously, spiritually—from the couple. After the demise of her husband, the wife spends all her time in worship and prayer and service to others.

The mother was a teacher in some school and she has retired lately. The father was a bank official and has also retired. They have two children. Sounds normal indeed. The speciality about the family is that the children are not of the ordinary type; they want God alone, just as their devout parents want nothing but the realization of God. The mother gladly agreed to her aspirant son's keen desire to renounce the world and herself brought him to a monastery. The daughter too has no other interest but selfless service. Her life is a long story of sincere service to others.

He is an engineer. He is married and has

a son. The family spends most of its time in worship and prayer. There is special *pūjā* at home everyday. Parents sit with the son and read from scriptures everyday. He runs a construction firm. And there is no chance of any of his clients' worrying about dishonesty at all. He spends the money he gets, after giving a little to the family, in helping poor students, hapless patients, etc.

Instances are innumerable. We just gave a few samples. Hundreds of doctors are working selflessly for others. There are many parents today who aren't interested in their sons' and daughters' becoming engrossed in the world. They are happy if their children seek God, which is the only goal of life. They themselves lead wonderful lives. They have very few desires, if at all they have. All that they want is to know the Truth, and that their children should lead pure and immaculate lives.

You can find such examples all around you. Look for it and you will notice greatness. Every householder can lead a grand life, once he or she fixes the goal of life. If there is no cooperation from any corner, prayer to God will set things right in time. And some opposition is always needed in order to keep up the heat. So, the ideal of *Rāma rājya* can be materialized when most householders consider not material but spiritual gain as their end and work sincerely towards that end. Sri Ramakrishna has demonstrated that it is possible for the householder to lead a beautiful and pure life. To emulate examples is what is needed now. □

Dear reader, your attention, please!



In modern society, can you lead a successful and happy life by being *perfectly* moral? Explain.



Prabuddha Bharata invites your opinion about this paradox. **In not more than 150 words**, please send your thoughts to *The Editor, Prabuddha Bharata, PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat, Dt Champawat 262524, UP*. Mention 'My Thoughts' on the envelope. Selections from the best opinions will be published. **No quotations please.** It is your genuine thoughts that we want. Write your full name, age, address, and occupation. Send us your opinion before **15 August 2000**.

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

A Great Indian Monk

She was a princess and the wife of the royal preceptor of the king of Kuchi. But Jiva became a nun soon after her son Kumarajiva's birth. When Kumarajiva was nine years old, Jiva took him to Kashmir, where the boy studied Buddhist literature. The mother also took her son on pilgrimage to Buddhist centres in Central Asia. Kumarajiva became a great Buddhist scholar. Meanwhile, the Chinese army besieged Kuchi and the small country had to surrender. The victorious Chinese general asked Kumarajiva to come to China. In 401 CE, Kumarajiva went to the Chinese Emperor and stayed there till 412 CE. He translated more than 100 Sanskrit texts into Chinese and was the first teacher to teach Mahayana Buddhism in China. His great command over Sanskrit and Chinese languages, and learning in various branches of philosophy were proverbial (cf. *The Classical Age*, ed., R.C. Mazumdar, pp. 593-4).

Indian Archers of Old

'The archers from India formed a valuable element in the army of Xerxes [of Greece, 450 BC] and shared the defeat of Mardonius at Plataea,' says V.A. Smith in *Oxford History of India*.

The Love of Knowledge

'The monastery shelters several thousand priests of the highest ability and talents, whose fame has spread over wide regions. Their conduct is exemplary and they follow with all sincerity the teachings of the moral law. The monastic regulations are of a rigid character, and strict obedience to them is demanded. Discussions on the most abstruse problems proceed here from morn till night, to mutual enlightenment of young and old. Those whose knowledge is confined to the *Tripitakas* only have to hide themselves for shame. Students from different parts of India flock to the monastery to participate in the discussions; but before they can obtain admission they are examined by the gatekeepers and are required to give satisfactory answers to their difficult questions,' wrote Hsuan-tsang after visiting Nalanda University (cf. Hirananda Shastri, *Archaeology and Ancient Indian History*, p. 53).

The Antiquity of the Sanskrit Alphabet

Can you imagine! A.A. Macdonell writes in his *History of Sanskrit Literature* (1958 edition, p. 17): 'This complex alphabet [of Sanskrit] which was evidently worked out by learned Brahmans, must have existed by 500 BC. This is the alphabet which is recognised in Panini's great Sanskrit grammar of about 4th century BC. ... We Europeans on the other hand, 2500 years later, and in a scientific age, still employ an alphabet which is not only inadequate to represent all the sounds of our languages, but even preserves the random order in which vowels and consonants are jumbled up as they were in the Greek adaptation of the primitive Semitic arrangement of 3000 years ago.'

Temple Architecture in India

During the Last Millennium

SWAMI TATTWAJNANANANDA

Swami Tattwajnananandaji is a specialist in architecture. He is presently the principal of Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandira, Belur Math. In this article, Tattwajnananandaji makes a thorough study of temple architecture during the last 1000 years.

Efforts have been made to express the precise meaning of the term 'architecture' and its relation to human existence. Lethaby seems to be the best in his definition: 'Architecture is the matrix of civilization.' Viewed historically, architecture is the principal visible, material record of the intellectual evolution of human beings. Each great culture has made its own particular and peculiar contribution to the art of building. Through this, the aspirations of various peoples and their ways of life stand revealed to a substantial degree for everyone to see.

There has been one basic principle in every major architectural development in history which is supremely distinctive to it. With the Greeks it is refined perfection. With the

Romans it is scientific construction. With the French Gothic buildings it is passionate energy. With the Italian Renaissance it is the reflection of the scholarship of its time. And with India it is the spiritual content. The fundamental purpose of the building art is to represent in concrete form the prevailing religious consciousness of the people.

The Vedic Hindus were fire worshippers and hence temples didn't come up until there was the Greek influence on the subsequent Buddhist architecture. The Buddhist movement developed stupas, pillars, etc, and the monastic lifestyle promoted cave-like structures where hermits found refuge. Thus the rock-cut architecture called *viharas* and *chaityas*, worked out by Buddhist bhikkhus in

western India — in Bhaja, Ajanta, Nasik, Karli, etc — dated back to days before Christ and show the origins of various elements in temple architecture.

The Karli chaitya (fig. 1) is an excellent example of Buddhist temple architecture. 124 ft long, 46 ft

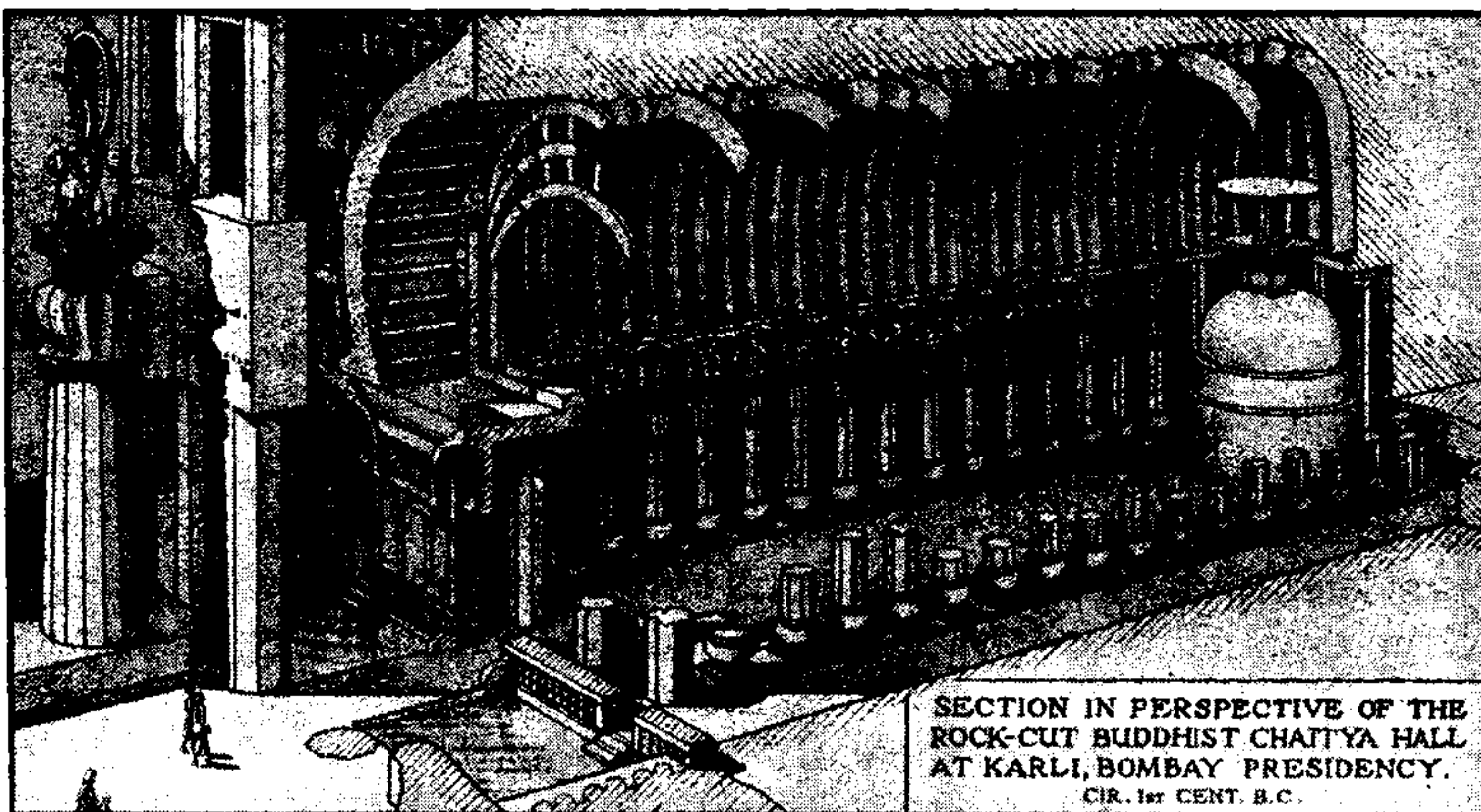


Fig. 1: The chaitya hall at Karli

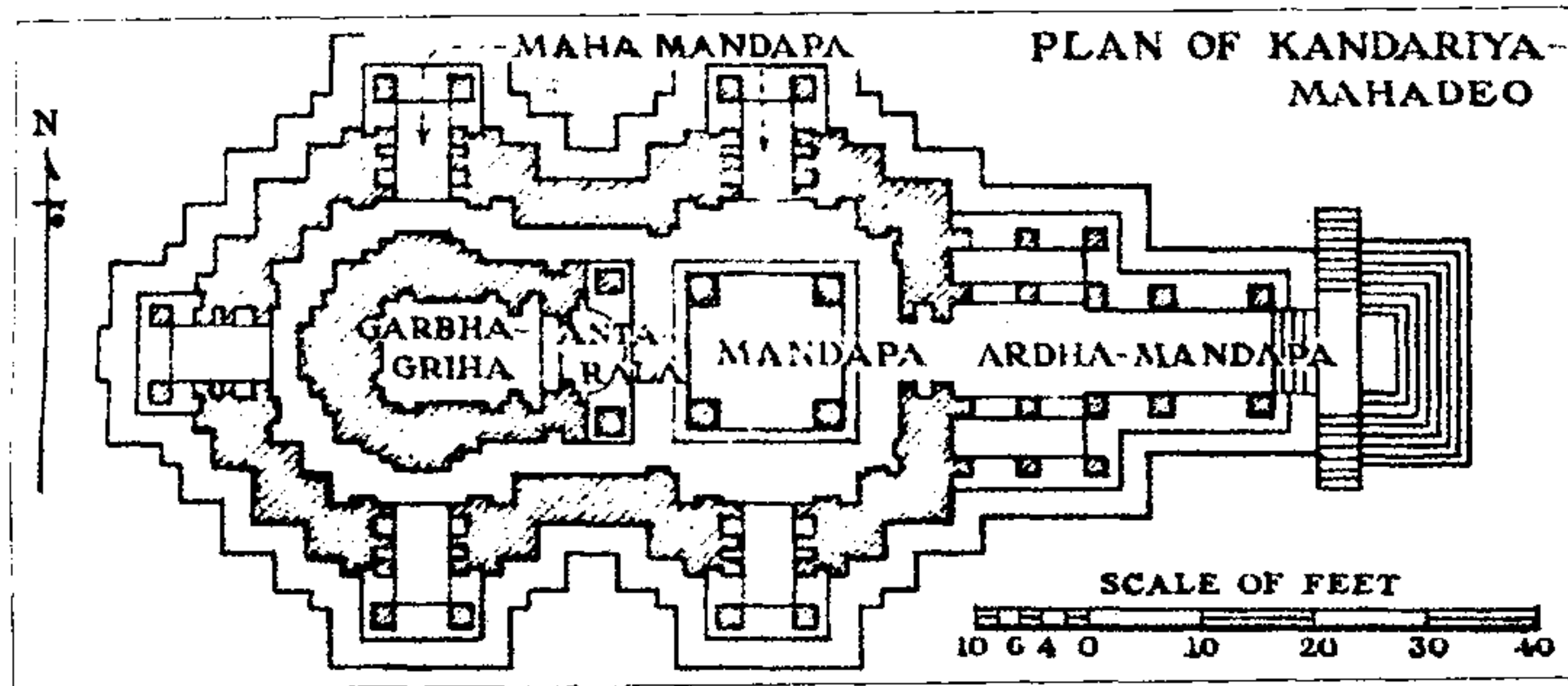


Fig. 2: Typical plan of a temple at Khajuraho

wide, and 59 ft high, its circumambulatory path with a nave and aisles, the vaulted roof with the great sun window and its well-balanced façade are all wonderful examples of the best architecture. Buddhist architecture flourished up to the 9th century AD as can be seen in the great rock-cut samples at Ajanta and Ellora near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. As Hinduism revived under the Gupta dynasty around 400 AD in central and northern India and the Chalukya dynasty in the Deccan, many noteworthy temples came up, especially in Aihole and Badami in Bijapur district, Karnataka.

In the latter half of the 7th century, temple structures were beginning to assume a definite pattern as they are seen today. Throughout the greater part of India, the sanctuary as a whole came to be known as *vi-mana*, of which the upper pyramidal or tapering portion was called *shikhara*, meaning tower or spire. Inside the *vi-mana* was a small and generally dark chamber or cella for the symbol of the Divine, called the *garbha-griha*. It could be entered through a doorway situated on its eastern side. In front of the doorway was a pillared hall

called *mandapa* or pavilion from where devotees could pray and worship the deity. The *mandapa* and *garbha-griha* were connected by a vestibule called *antarala*. Leading up to the *mandapa* was a porch or *ardha-mandapa* (see fig. 2).

Most of the temples had a processional passage or *pradakshina patha*, an enclosed corridor around the outside of the *garbha-griha*. In some parts of the country the temple was enclosed within a rectangular courtyard by means of a continuous range of cells facing inwards and the whole forming a substantially strong wall to ensure seclusion as well as protection. Indian temples were dwelling places of gods but were not designed for congregational worship.

With the institution of precise ways of building temples around the 8th century AD, people embarked upon an era of temple building. The next few centuries were an epoch of



Fig. 3: The Kailasanath temple, Ellora

great religious concentration and intensity. Every town had temples: the tall spires of temples rose singly or in groups everywhere. With the structural religious edifices were also rock-cut monuments, notably at the famous sites like Ellora and Elephanta.

The Kailasanath temple in Ellora (fig. 3) is a class in itself. It is a unique structure as the architect reproduced on virgin rock the full details of a huge temple. The ground plan of the Kailasa temple approximates that of Parthenon at Athens and its height is one-and-a-half times that of the same Greek masterpiece. King Krishna I (757-783 AD) of the Rashtrakuta dynasty of Malkhed was the monarch who built this edifice. He was a very resourceful monarch. Kailasa has four parts: the body of the temple itself, the entrance gateway, an intermediate Nandi shrine, and the cloister surrounding the courtyard. The main body of the temple is 150 ft by 100 ft. The two 'flag-posts' (*dhwaja-stambha*), one on each side of the Nandi shrine, are 51 ft tall; they are finished works of art. Kailasa is an illustration of one of those rare instances when men's minds, hearts and hands work in unison towards the consummation of a supreme ideal.

Another masterpiece that came up at the turn of the first millennium was the Bri-



Fig. 4: The Brihadiswara temple at Tanjore

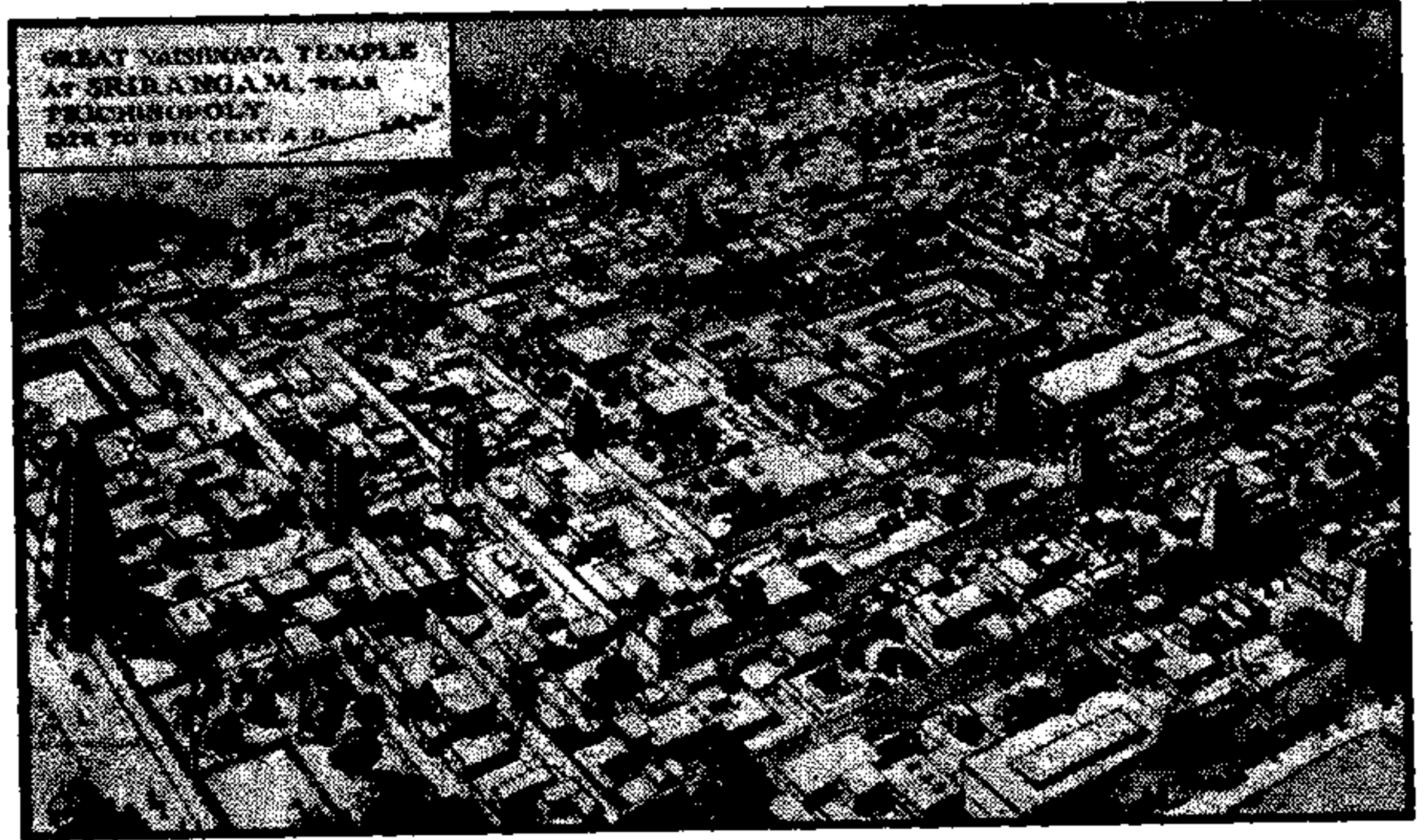


Fig. 5: The famous Vishnu temple at Srirangam

hadiswara temple in Tanjore, Tamilnadu (fig. 4). Rajaraja Chola the Great (985-1018) of the Chola dynasty must have had a profound spiritual impulse that moved him to commemorate the material achievements of his line with the building of this great temple. [There is another version which says that this temple was built by King Chola Rajendra I (1012-1044), who is said to have conquered lands up to the river Ganga, and is hence called *Gangaikondachola*.] It is a landmark in the evolution of the building art in southern India. The main structure is 180 ft long above which rises a massive pyramidal tower 190 ft high.

During the last millennium, besides the south, six different regional developments took place in the rest of India. These developments were in Kalinga in eastern India, Khajuraho and Gwalior in central India, Rajputana, Gujarat, Kathiawar and Maharashtra in western India. Although each regional manifestation has its own peculiarities, there is an undercurrent of thought resulting in the standardization of forms, principles and procedures which indicate that fundamentally all these examples belong to the same vast movement.

After the Cholas, newer

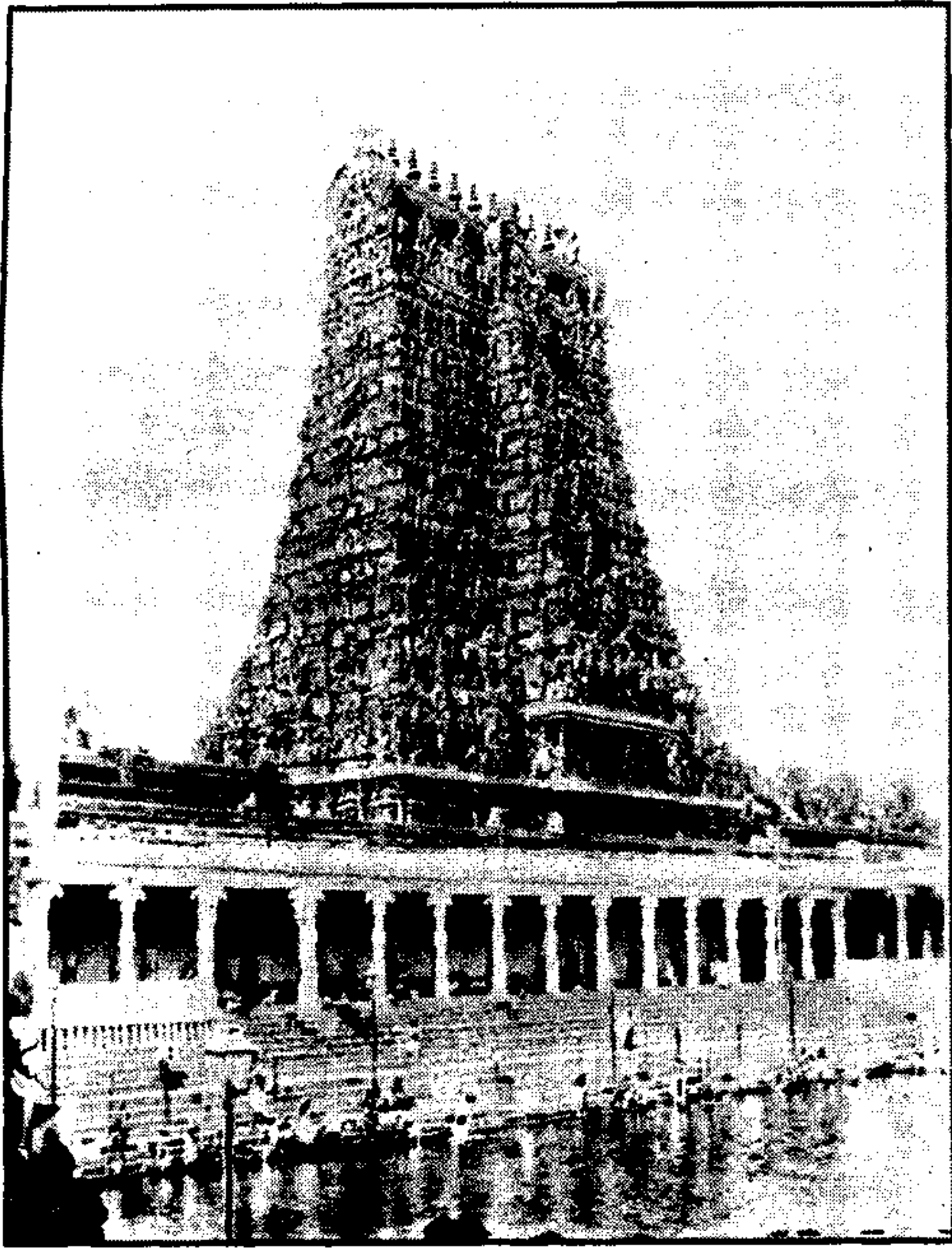


Fig. 6: Southern gopuram of the Madurai temple

techniques of temple architecture developed under the Pandyan dynasty. The Pandyan temples were surrounded by a series of concentric walls (fig. 5), enclosing open courtyards or *prakarams*, approached through high watch-towers called *gopurams* (figs. 6, 7). In relation to the enclosure wall the *gopuram*,

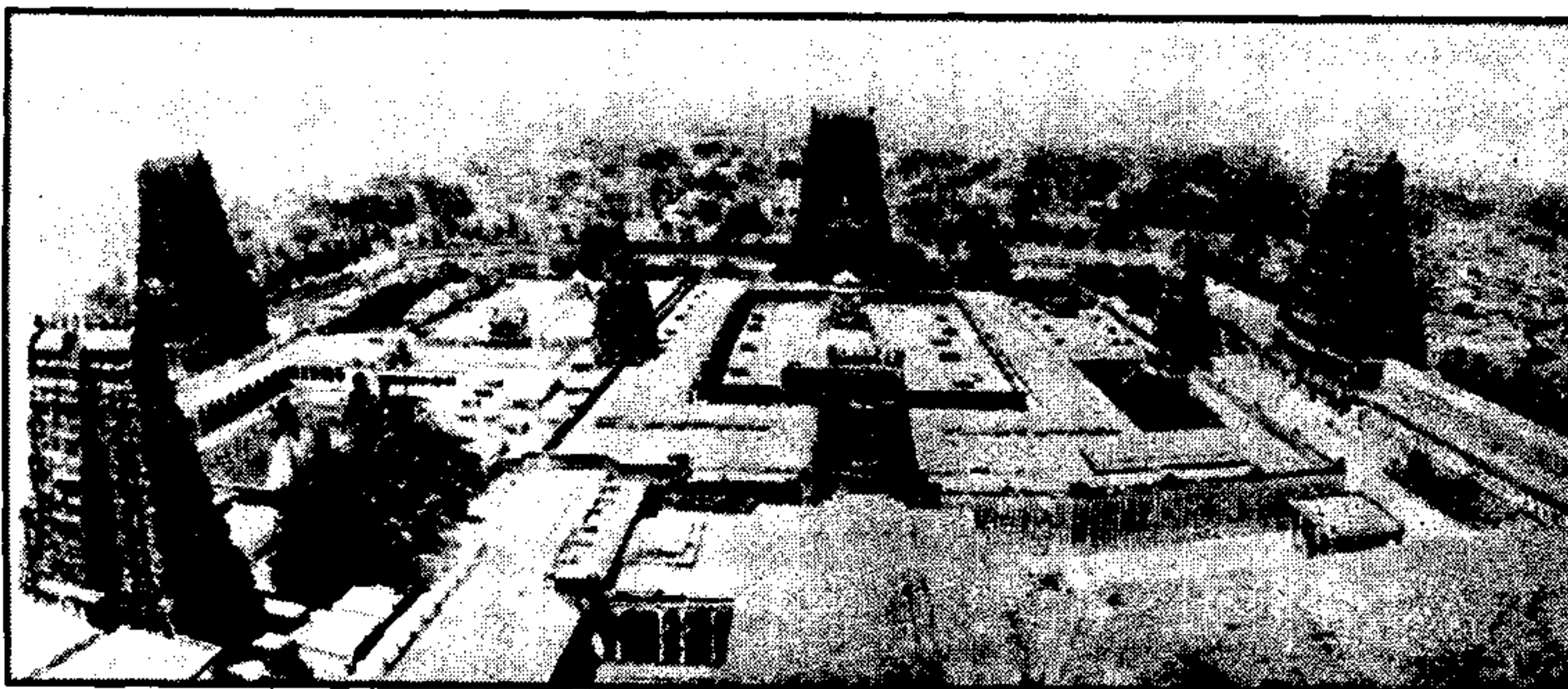


Fig. 7: An ariel view of gopurams of the Madurai temple

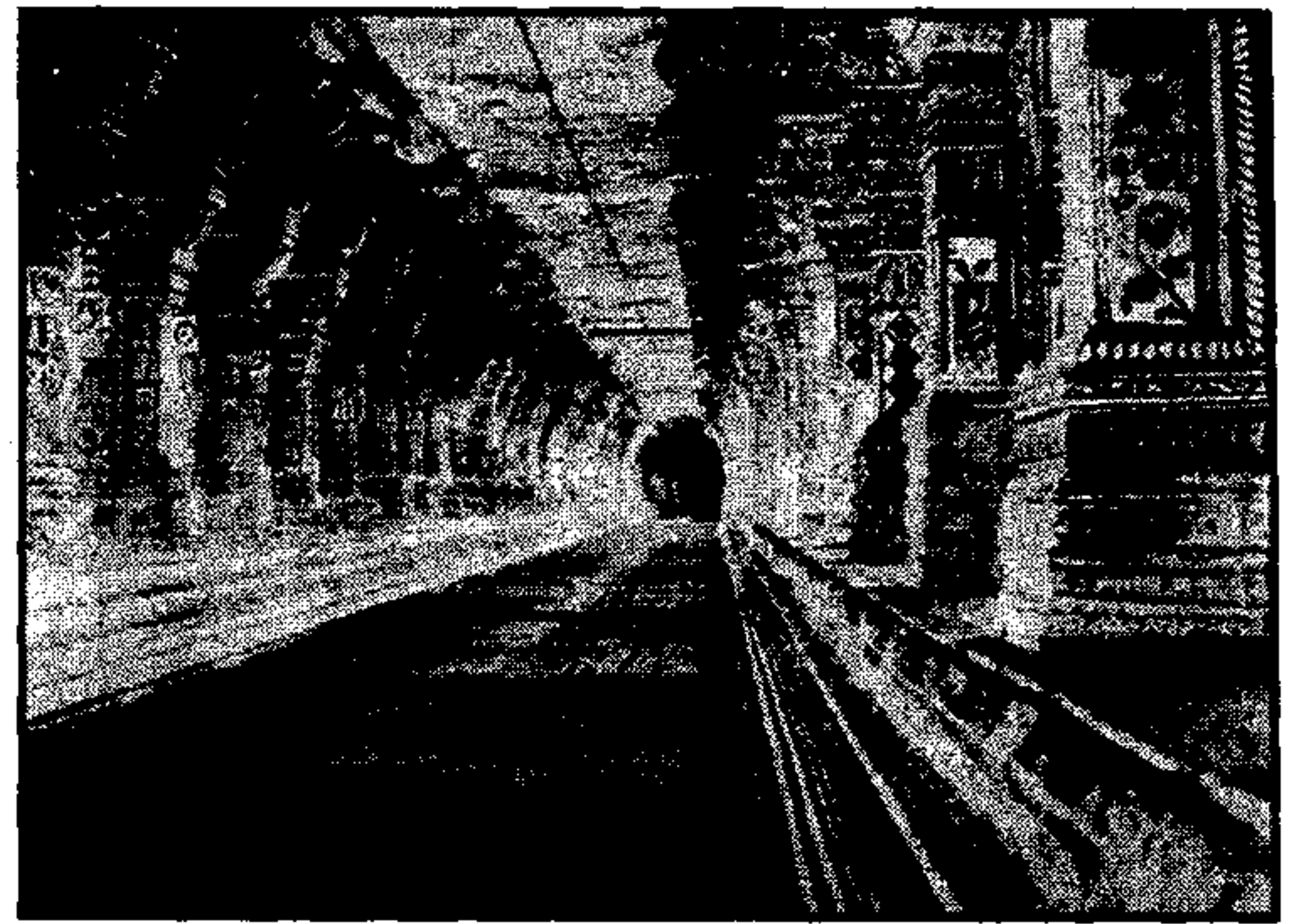


Fig. 8: Corridor of the Rameshwaram temple

derived from the cow-gate of the Vedic village, had immense wealth of plastic embellishment. Another important feature that developed in the Dravidian style was the beautiful ornate pillars that adorned the long colonnades of *mandapas* in the temple precincts (fig. 8).

The *gopurams* and pillars are the most imposing examples of south Indian building art, and they have reached their perfection in the Madurai Meenakshi temple. The two shrines, of Shiva and His consort Meenakshi, occupy most of the space in the enclosure of 850 ft by 725 ft. An important feature of this temple complex is a pool of golden lilies—an artificial reservoir 165 ft by 120 ft. In all, there are eleven *gopurams*. Then there is a court of a

thousand pillars covering a space of 240 ft by 250 ft with each pillar exquisitely carved.

The Orissa style is beautifully represented in the Lingaraja temple in Bhubaneswar (1000 AD) and the Sun temple at Konark (1250 AD), though there are other contenders like

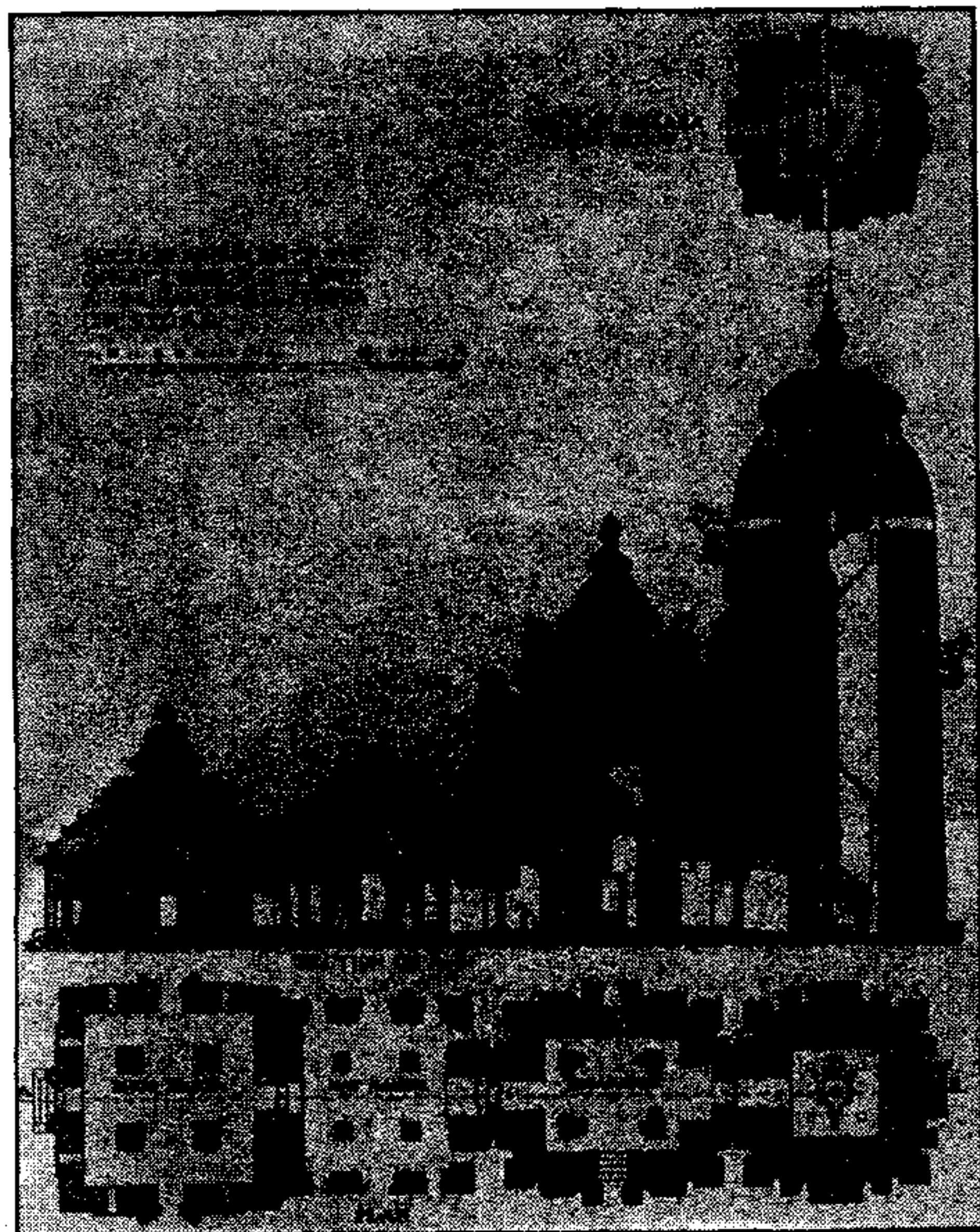


Fig. 9: A perspective of the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar

the Jagannath temple in Puri and 18 others.

The Lingaraja (fig. 9) is not only the finest example of Orissa style but it ranks as one of the foremost architectural creations of the country. The temple is situated at the centre of a quadrangular enclosure measuring 520 ft by 465 ft, contained within a high and solid wall on the inner face of which is a platform to be used for patrolling and defence on occasions. The presence of a great central building in the

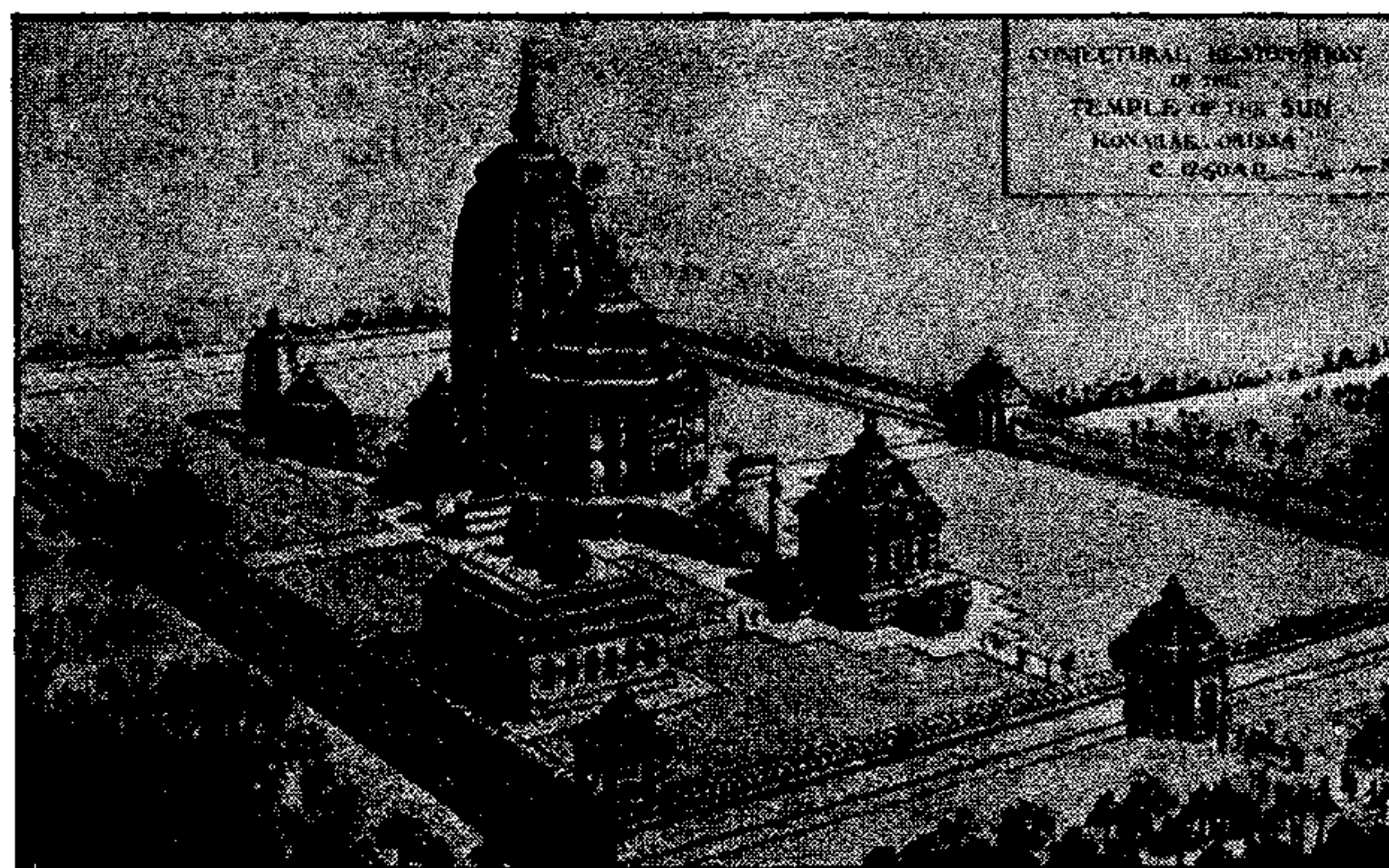


Fig. 10: An artist's perspective of the Sun temple at Konark



Fig. 11: The Konark Sun temple (entrance design)

midst of numerous smaller replicas cannot fail to recall the practice of the Buddhists in congregating their votive *chaityas* around a large stupa. The temple itself has four parts: the *sri mandira*, the great tower or *vimana*, the pillared hall or *jagmohan* or *mandapa*, the dancing hall or *nat-mandira*, and the hall of offering or *bhoga-mandira* on the same east-west axis.

The Sun temple of Konark built by King Narasimha Deva has been eulogized by Abul Fazl, the official historian of Emperor Akbar, in this way: 'Even those whose judgement is critical and who are difficult to please stand amazed at the sight' (*Ain-i-Akbari*, 1585 AD). Though the imagination and grandeur was great, probably it was not completed due to constructional difficulties. The temple was de-

signed as a chariot (*ratha*) with seven horses (for seven days of the week), with 12 giant wheels each 10 ft high, a *jagmohan* 100 ft wide and 100 ft high, and a tower behind rising up to 225 ft from the ground. The sculpted forms and intricate designs applied on the surfaces are of outstanding beauty and utility (figs. 10, 11).

The Khajuraho group of temples developed during the



Fig. 12: The Kandariya Mahadeo temple at Khajuraho (elevation)

supremacy of the Chandela rajas (950 to 1050 AD). At least a dozen of them combined the sacerdotal impulse of a tolerant and comprehensive nature, as they represent different be-

liefs like the Saivite, Vaishnavite and Jaina. Each temple stands on a high and solid masonry terrace and none is of any great size—the largest being only 100 ft in length—but have elegant proportions, graceful contours and depict rich surface treatment. On ground the temples take the general shape of a Latin cross with their axes east-west, and the sole entrances being towards the east at the foot of the cross. The structure itself was divided into three compartments: the inner sanctum (*garbha-griha*), the *mandapa*, and the *ardha-mandapa*. Supplementing this is the *antarala* and transepts or *maha-mandapa* with a processional passage around the sanctum (fig. 2, 12, 13).

During the 11th century, the development of temples took place under the Solanki dynasty in Gujarat, of which the Surya temple at Modhera and the Vimala temple at Mount Abu (Rajputana) are significant. The temple of Vimala was constructed entirely of white marble and designed to conform to the usage of the Jain religion. Enshrining Jina, the first *tirthankara*, the courtyard measures 145 ft by 95 ft. The temple stands screened by a double arcade of pillars and is cruciform in plan, its length being 98 ft and width 42 ft. The interior, contrasted with the exterior, is breathtaking: its elaborate sculptured forms and the marble carvings of its vaulted ceilings are a rare delight (fig. 14, 15). The temple-cities of the Jains



Fig. 13: Kandariya Mahadeo temple (details)

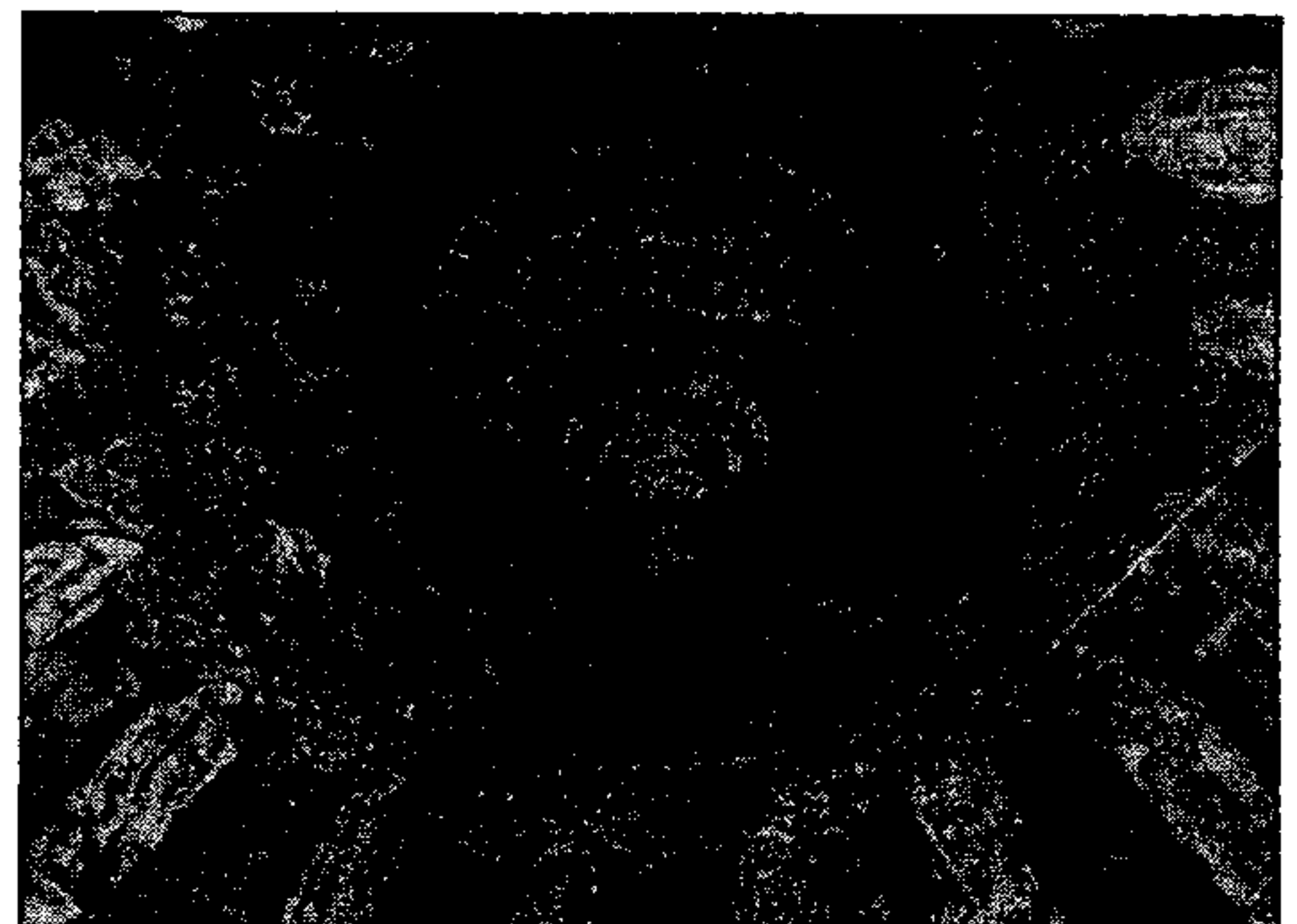


Fig. 14: The Dilwara temple (ceiling)

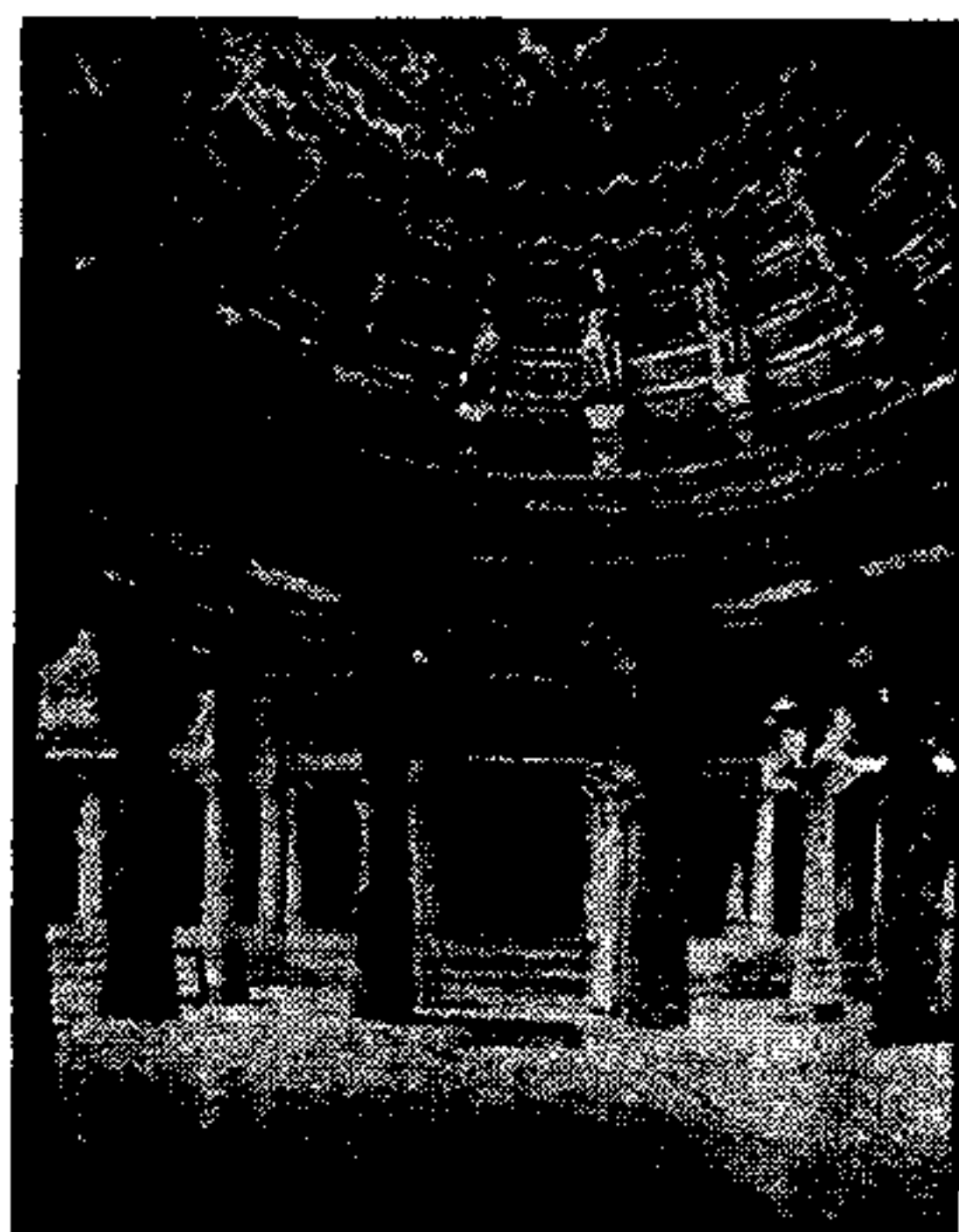


Fig. 15: Interior of the Vimala temple at Mt Abu

in the mountains of Gujarat, especially at Girnar and Shatrunjaya, need special mention (fig. 16).

The period between 1050 and 1300 (or later) saw the development of the Hoysala school of temple architecture in Karnataka with more than 80 examples. The common practice for the main portions of the sanctuary was to plan the outer walls in the form of a star. This was called the *ashtabhadra* plan, obtained using intricate geometrical devices. Secondly, the general effect of the treatment of walls was their horizontality. The ideals of the builders were like those of the arts and crafts peo-

ple—the sandalwood carver, the ivory worker, the metal caster, the goldsmith, etc—creating masterpieces of applied art as if they were not sculpting on stone but drawing things on paper. An excellent example of this is the Chennakeshava temple in Belur, Hassan district, Karnataka, which came up in 1117 AD.

The temples of Bengal that developed during the Malla rajas in the 17th century need special mention as these were built in laterite or bricks and are very special in their freshness and spontaneity. These temples were designed on the principle of a main structure square in the plan; the walls were vertical while the lines of the planes generally had a horizontal bent in the form of a bow clearly inherited from the bamboo framework to throw off heavy monsoon rain. An example of this type is the Bishnupur temple (fig. 19, 20).

To all intents and purposes, the rock method of expression was drawing to a close towards the end of the 10th century, and there was the beginning of the structural movement in the next. This is clearly evidenced in the Deccan in the region between the Krishna and Tapati rivers which is the Maharashtra of today. Though the Deccan temples of the period

between 11th and 13th centuries were heavily influenced by two powerful movements — one from Gujarat and the other from Chalukyas — they display many independent and original features. The *shikhara* in these temples is decidedly different from the other styles in that it has a pronounced ver-

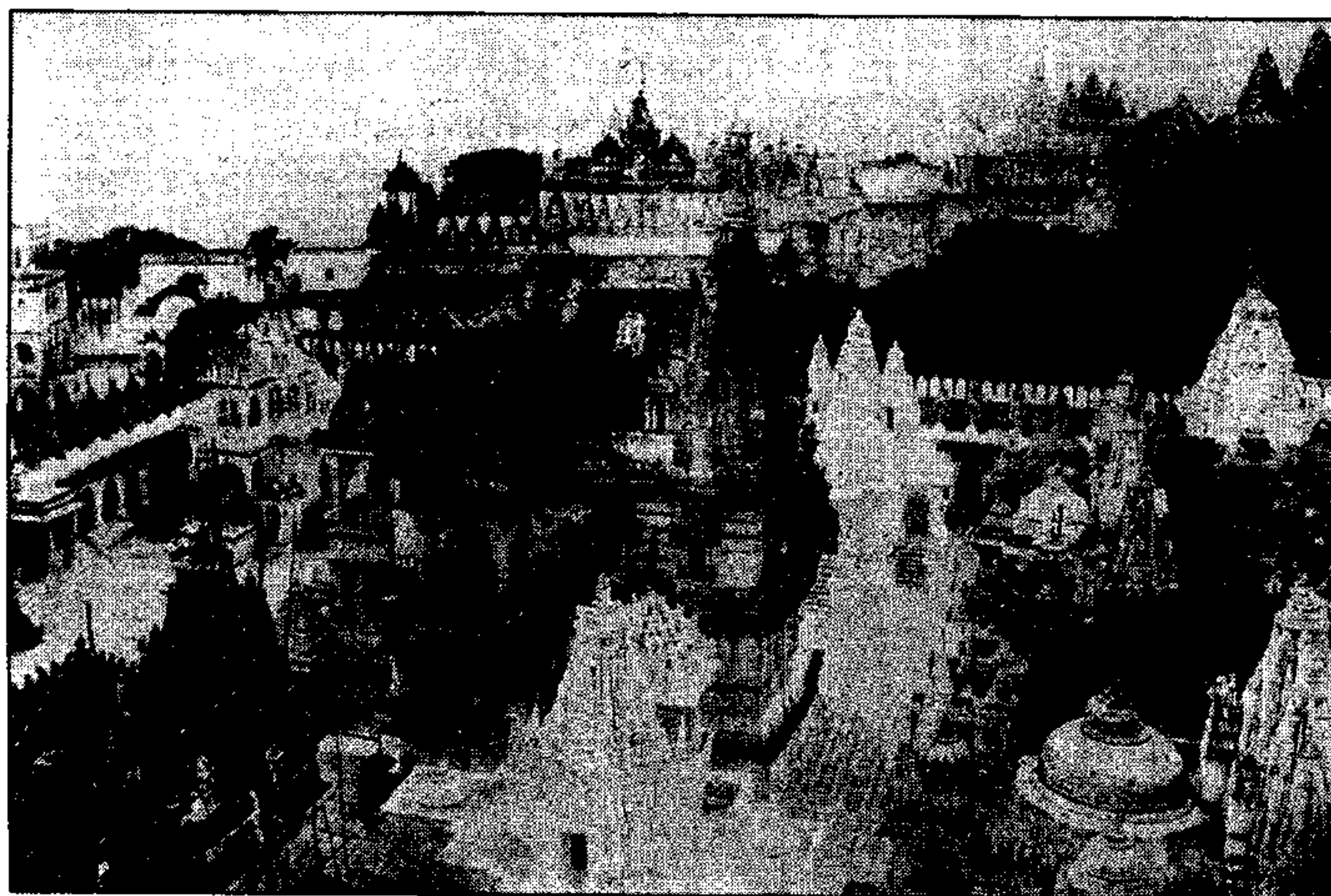


Fig. 16: A bird's-eye view of the Satrunjaya Hill Jain temples



Fig. 17: The Chennakesava temple at Belur, Karnataka



Fig. 18: Columns of the Chennakesava temple

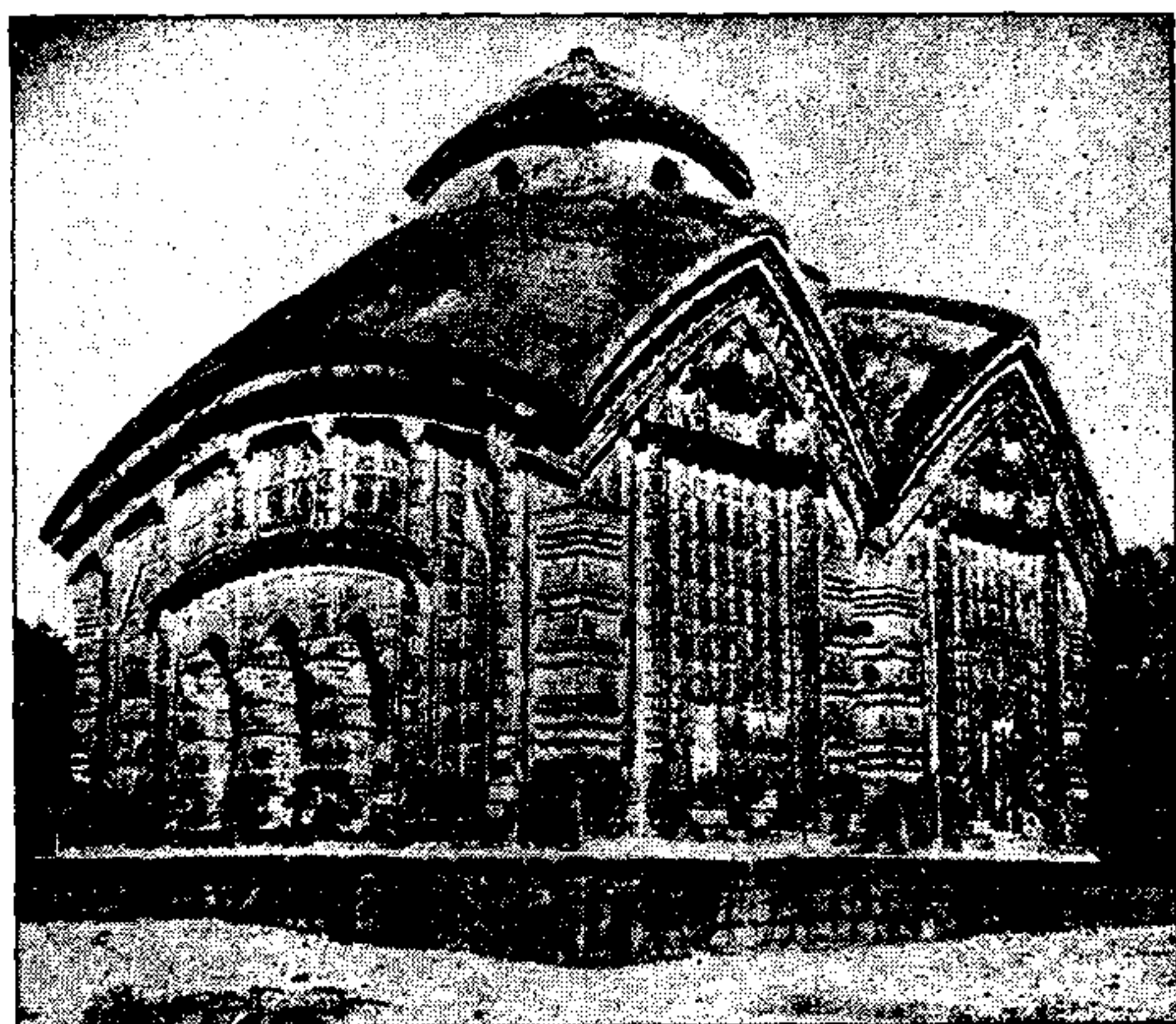


Fig. 19: The Bishnupur temple

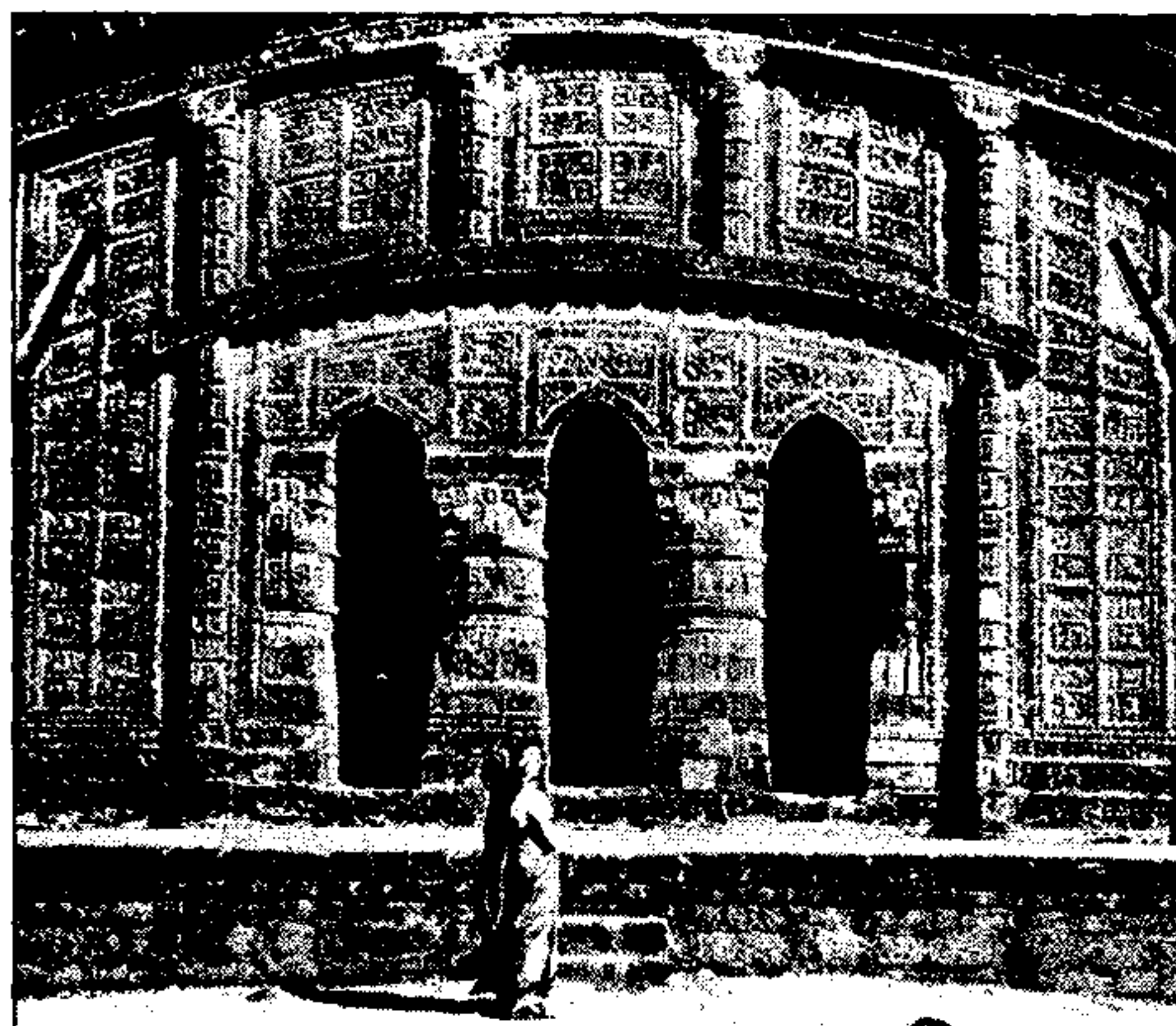


Fig. 20: Bishnupur temple (front view)

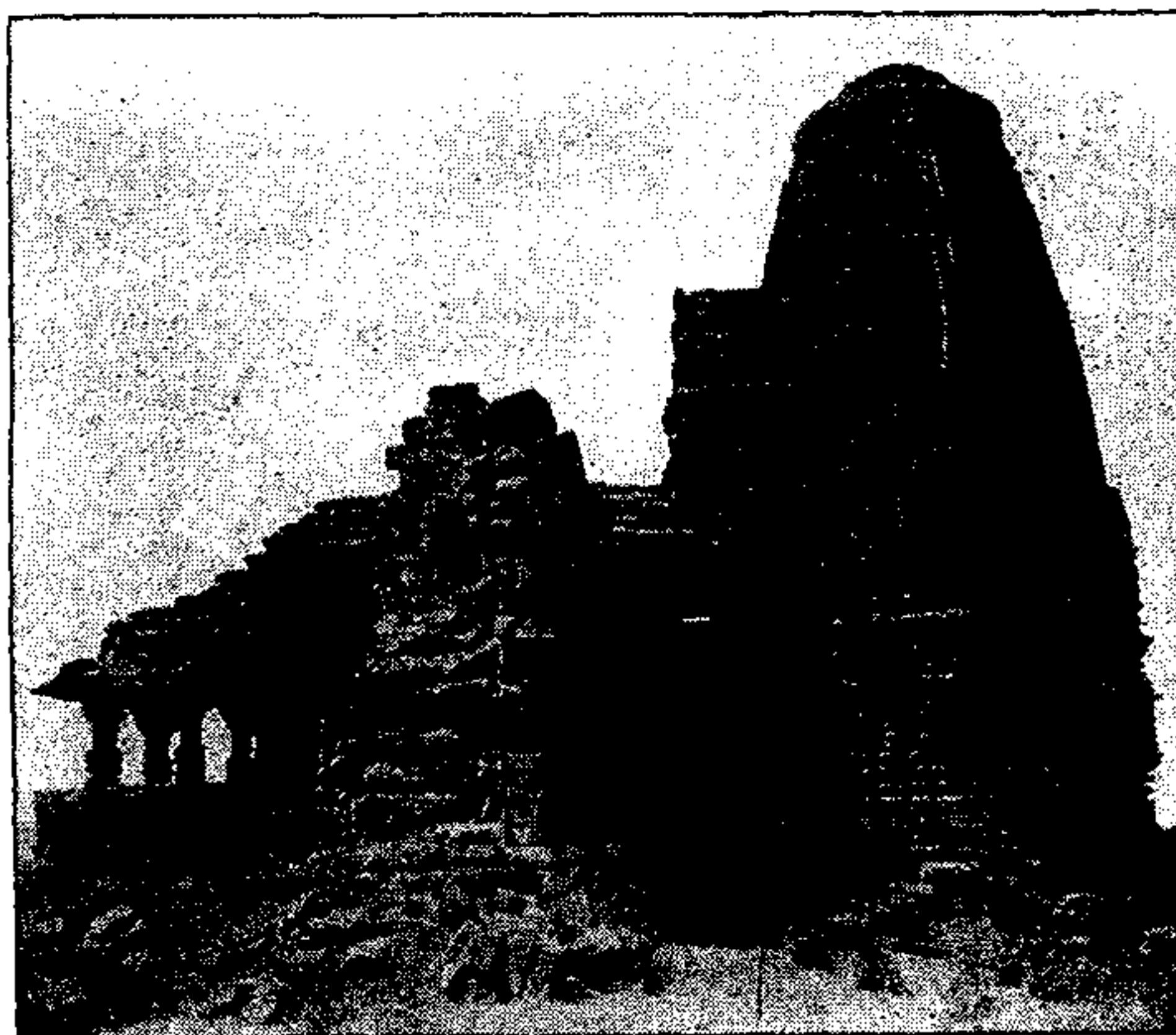


Fig. 21: The Shiva temple of Nasik

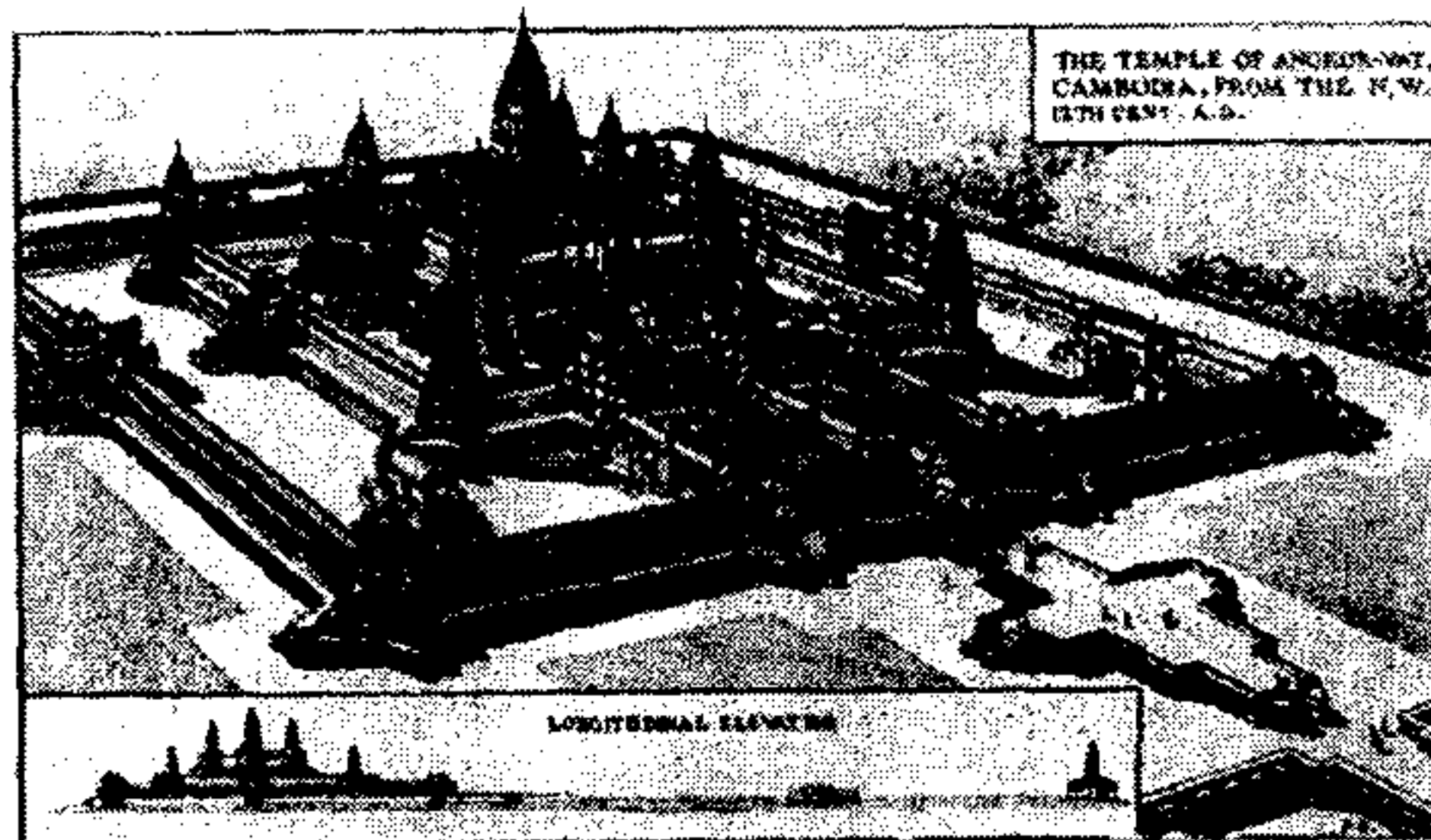


Fig. 22: The Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia



Fig. 23: The Hindu temple at Neasden, UK

tical band, carried up; each of its angles takes the form of a spine or quoin. Originality is noticable in the plans of these temples as they are laid out on a diagonal arrangement. The light and shade created by mouldings, projections and recesses are unparalleled. The pillars are also of original order (fig. 21).

The impact of the Indian temple architecture was felt by the then remote parts of greater India, like Nepal, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, Siam, Indonesia, etc. Angkor Wat is a magnificent architectural composition, considered to be the largest and most impressive stone temple in existence, conceived by King Suryavarman II (1112-1151). Originally a Vishnu temple, it was converted into a Buddhist one during the reign of King Jayavarman VII (1181-1201), the last of the great Cambodian rulers. The whole temple was surrounded by an immense moat 650 ft wide and

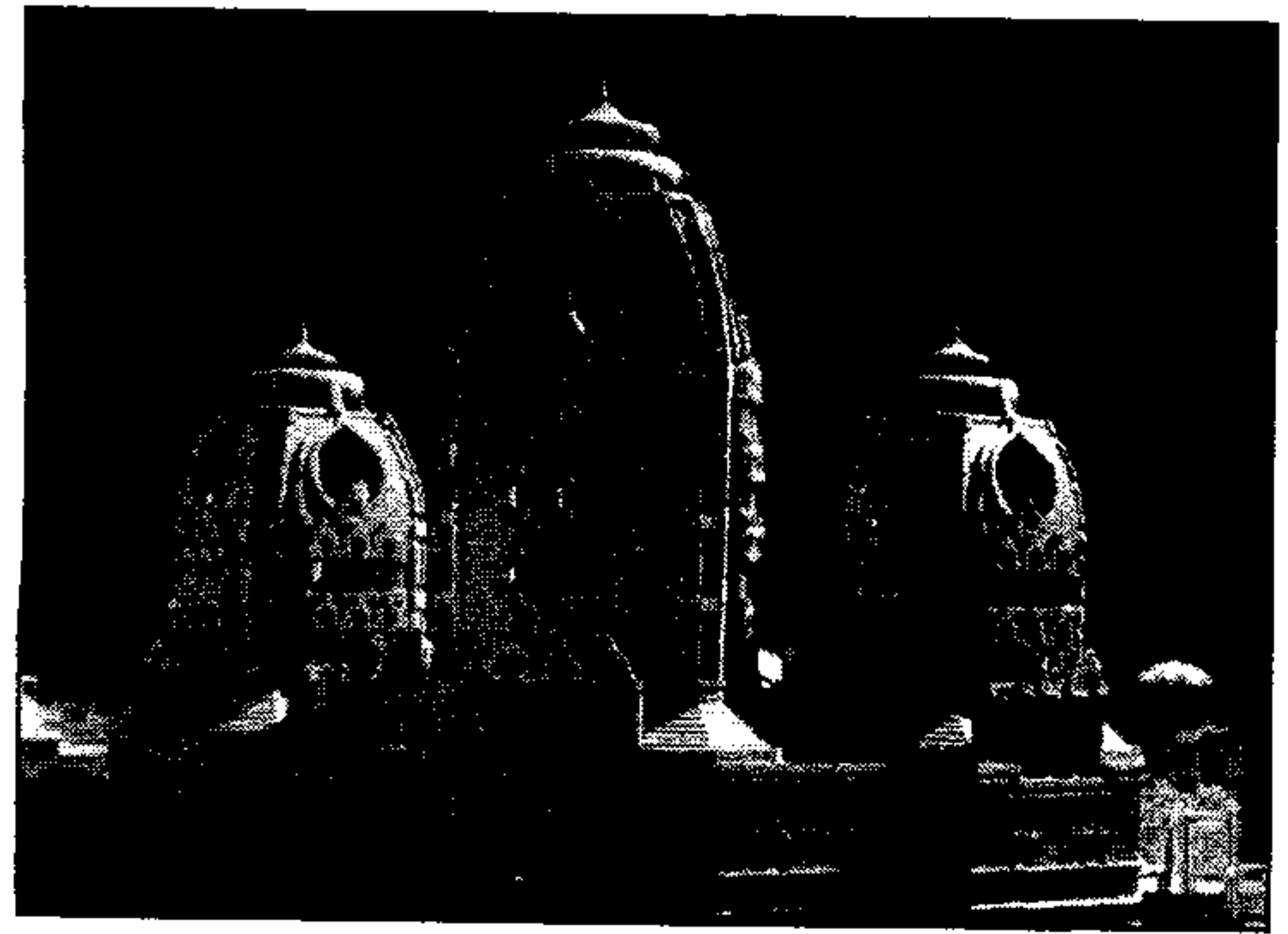


Fig. 24: The ISKCON temple at Delhi (a model)

2.5 miles long (fig. 22).

The Muhammadan conquest of the major parts of India and subsequent subjection under the Imperial rule placed constraints on temple construction as the patronage of kings came to an end. During the beginning of the previous century, the temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Belur, West Bengal followed by various temples built in independent India as well as abroad have given impetus to the imagination of architects. The Lakshmi-Narayana temples built by the Birlas, Krishna temples by ISKCON (fig. 24), and the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari are some of the examples of new temples in India. Non-resident Indians have become active in creating a religious atmosphere especially in UK (fig. 23) and USA by building new temples which are gorgeous in detail and imposing in appearance. □

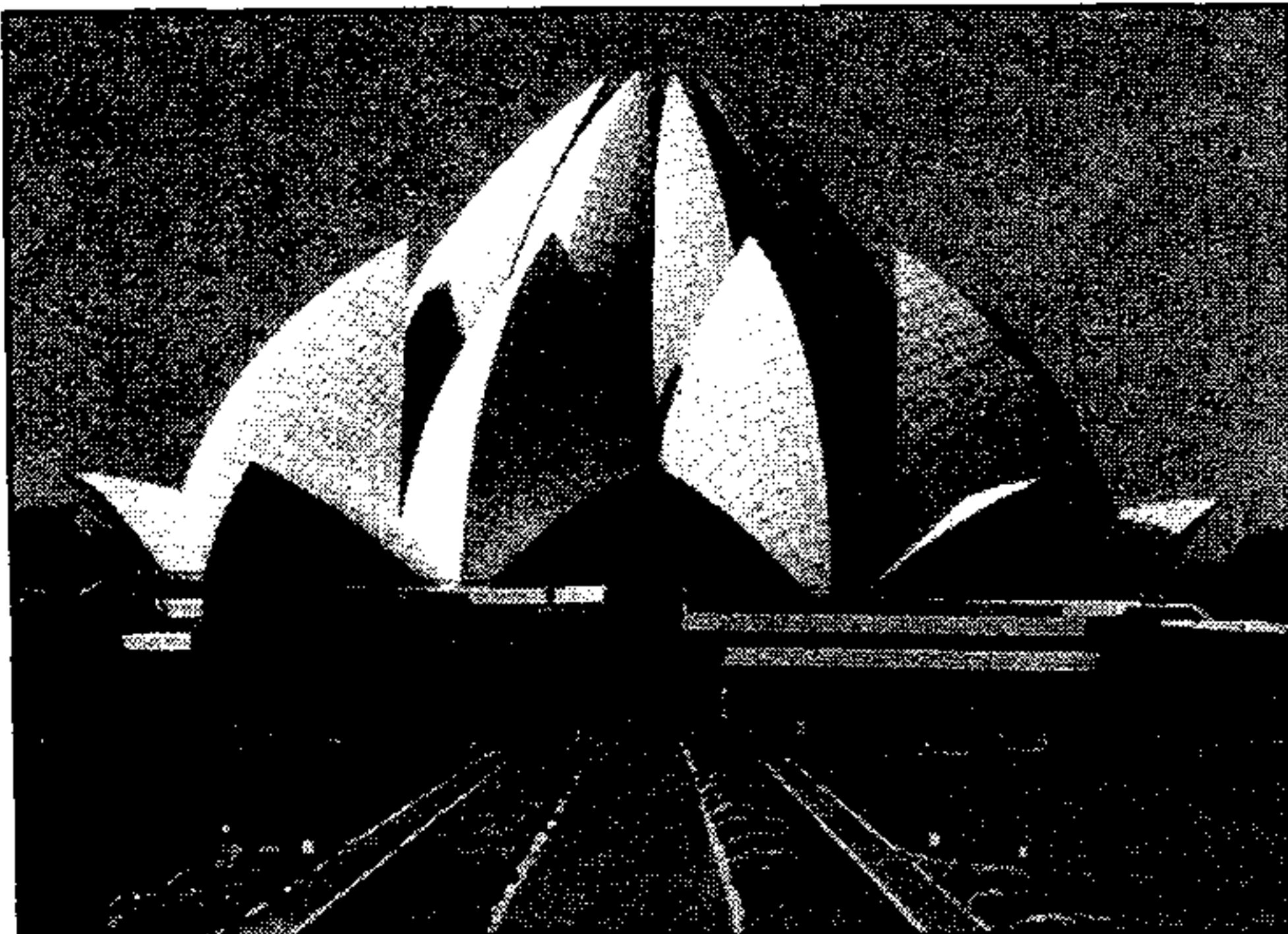


Fig. 25: The Bahai temple at New Delhi



Fig. 26: The Ramakrishna temple at Belur WR

A Lesson to Remember

Guru Purnima falls on the 16th of this month. To commemorate the event, we carry the following interesting anecdote, based on a Hindi article, published in the July 1950 number of Bharati. Here is a lesson for those of us who, instead of depending on God, try to hold on to mortals and rituals.

We all know that Sri Krishna was Arjuna's friend, charioteer, and teacher. After the Kurukshetra war, Arjuna desired to bathe in the Ganga in order to be freed from sins. He told Krishna about this and asked him to take the chariot to the river Ganga. Krishna understood Arjuna's mind. Arjuna had forgotten that Krishna was with the Lord Himself even after having seen His universal form. So Krishna smiled and did as he was told. After going to a secluded corner on the banks of the river, he told Arjuna, 'Arjuna, please wait here for a while. I shall meet one of my friends nearby and return soon.' Sri Krishna went away. Meanwhile, four or five people brought a dead body to where Arjuna was standing. They were quarrelling over some issue. When Arjuna heard their conversation attentively, he understood that they had forgotten to bring fire to light the pyre. That was their trouble. After some discussion they left the dead body on the ground and went to bring fire.

Soon Arjuna saw a dog coming towards the dead body. The dog, began to sniff at it. It sniffed the body's face, the hands, and then the feet. Surprising as it seemed to Arjuna, the dog walked away without tasting the body at all! A second dog approached the first one and enquired: 'My friend, what's the matter? Why are you going away without eating the delicacy?' The first dog replied: 'Listen. Owing to my sins in the previous birth, I have been born as a dog this time. But I never partake of impure food. I smelled this person's face, hands and feet and discovered that he hasn't performed a single good deed all his life. He

has never uttered the name of God. He has never offered a penny to anyone in charity. His feet have never taken him towards any temple all his life. Therefore his body is untouchable to me.'

The second dog heard all this and replied: 'What you say is right. See how human beings commit mistakes because of ignorance! Look over there. You see Arjuna sitting on the chariot. He is a friend and disciple of Sri Krishna. In spite of this, see what a trap of ignorance he has fallen into! He has come to the river Ganga to wash away his sins. He has forgotten that this celestial river was born from the lotus feet of Narayana, the supreme Lord who is Arjuna's teacher. He has also forgotten that, by coming in contact with the Lord, a human being becomes supremely blessed and such a person is pure for all time to come. Even though he is in close contact with Lord Krishna Himself, Arjuna is going to the river Ganga to wash his sins. How ignorant he is!' Arjuna was stunned. He thought: 'These dogs are saying the right thing indeed. My mind couldn't get purified by my contact with the Lord, and I am going to bathe in the holy river! How foolish of me!'

After a few moments, Sri Krishna returned. Arjuna placed his head at the feet of Krishna. Instantly his head was washed by the sweet-smelling water of the Ganga. Krishna embraced his dear friend and disciple. Arjuna realized that what he saw and heard was all Krishna's creation, and shed tears of joy. His eyes had opened. □

Swami Vivekananda says: 'Nothing must stand between me and God, only love.'

Biotechnology

A Christian Perspective

PROF TED PETERS

Last month we published an article on the Hindu/Buddhist perspective of biotechnology. Here is what Prof Ted Peters thinks about biotechnology from a Christian point of view. He teaches Systematic Theology at the Pacific Lutheran Seminary in Berkeley, California, USA. This article is a gift from AHIMSA.

I want to deal with a topic which I am still working on. It is the concept of co-evolution and its potential value for spirituality. More specifically, I'm talking about the co-development and mutual symbiosis of humans and human viruses, which are sort of free-floating DNA and RNA which can live only in the biological environment of a human body, and which influence the development of our own DNA as we live together. As you can see, there is an ahimsa dimension to this issue, and my question is whether the concept of co-evolution might provide us with some intellectual comfort, some spiritual meaning, inasmuch as it gives a scientific name to something we know intuitively, that as human beings we are intrinsically and inextricably related to all other sentient beings and to physical reality in general. At the same time, we also have the capacity to transcend, however hard that might be to define. To phrase my question more precisely then, do we find comfort in an awareness of our intrinsic inter-relatedness, or in transcendence, or perhaps both?

Human evolution is the end product of aeons of development and transformation, through many forms and modifications. I love Huston Smith's recounting of the facts around the Scopes trial in Tennessee. It shows us how far secular consciousness has advanced since that time in relation to a religious view of the world. I remember being very moved by the film *Inherit the Wind*, in which the people marched through the streets singing how they

planned to hang the lawyer Clarence Darrow. And the battle between religious and secular ideas continues today, particularly on the bumpers of cars. We see the fish symbol of early Christianity, chosen because the Greek word for fish could be read as an acronym for 'Christ, Son of God, Saviour.' We also see the fish symbol with Darwin's name inside and legs growing from the now-evolving fish. Lately we see a larger Christian fish about to eat a smaller Darwinian fish. And so the battle is waged.

But let us return to viruses. They are fragments of DNA, for example the herpes simplex virus, or RNA, for example the influenza virus. DNA viruses are relatively stable. Once they enter a human cell they maintain their genome. Retroviruses, a form of RNA virus, mutate quickly, making it hard to develop a vaccine against them.

Let me tell you a story about co-evolution. In the 1850s, an English gentleman took rabbits to Australia, hoping to continue the sport of rabbit hunting on the newly colonized continent. They were evidently very poor shots, because the rabbits multiplied so profusely that they became a national pest within a century. So the Australians asked science for a way to rid themselves of the rabbits, and were offered a virus from Brazil. They imported special mosquitoes, which carried this virus, and within three months 99.8% of the rabbits were dead. Sounds successful, doesn't it? By 1957, just seven years later, the rabbit

population was virtually restored, and this time only 25% were susceptible to the virus carried by the Brazilian mosquitoes. This is natural selection at work, with 0.2% of the original rabbit population surviving a viral onslaught to produce offspring which could withstand their predecessors' viral enemy. The rabbits could now live in harmony with the virus. This is one example of a developing mutual relationship between an animal species and a virus.

Does such an example provide us with spiritual comfort? Is it comfort to see how we too have co-evolved with non-human species in ways that allow us to survive together? If we want purity in our bodies, what does this mean? How shall we think of viruses that enter our cells and modify our DNA, killing some of us off and leaving the rest able to survive with that virus inside? Does purity include the presence of such a virus, or can it only be understood as freedom from such internal residents?

I could see a concept like co-evolution providing spiritual comfort being understood on a statistical level. If we use the image of the epic of evolution, in which we see ourselves as part of a reality much larger than ourselves, within which we must sacrifice part of our species in order for the rest to go on, that is a kind of comfort. At the individual level, however, I'm not so sure this works.

Let me discuss now two kinds of freedom, a word which I will equate with transcendence. There's something about the human spirit that wants to transcend nature, for good or ill. The first kind of freedom I will call Promethean. It comes to us from the ancient Greek thought, and refers to the myth of Prometheus, a titan who snuck up to heaven and stole fire from the gods. Zeus felt that the sun was his private property and was not to be shared with the created order living below him in relative darkness. So when Prometheus, strong and clever as he was, stole fire and bestowed it on mankind, allowing them to cook their food and to be active even

in darkness, Zeus was very angry and punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock and allowing an eagle to feast daily off his liver. But Prometheus had a younger brother named Epimetheus, which can't help but raise the question of etymology. Prometheus means 'to think ahead', while Epimetheus means 'to think afterward'. Prometheus, seeing Zeus' nature, warned Epimetheus not to accept gifts from Zeus. But when Zeus sent him a gift in the form of the beautiful Pandora, Epimetheus couldn't resist. He immediately brought her into his house and married her. Unfortunately, her curiosity was her (and Epimetheus') downfall. Despite a stern prohibition from the gods, she couldn't resist opening a certain magic box, and when she did, out flew all the ills which plague mankind—war, pestilence, hunger, you name it. By the time she managed to slam the lid shut, the only entity left in the box was *hope*. And so the story ends.

Today, when we think of the Promethean spirit which really characterizes modern science, we think both of looking ahead to a better future earned through our ingenuity and cleverness and also of the potential dangers which might lie hidden in ingenuity's forbidden box. We don't imagine that Zeus will punish us, of course, but rather that nature will. We fear that nature will destroy us for unlocking or tampering with her secrets. We fear the consequences of playing God.

In the light of this myth, how can we but feel some fear toward the high-powered, aggressive, ambitious mood of contemporary science, especially when it is associated with medical research? I think of Mary Clark King, one of my favourite Prometheans, formerly at the University of California, Berkeley, who has devoted nearly two decades of her life to the search for the gene in chromosome number 17 responsible for breast cancer in women. After a decade and a half of searching someone else found it first, using her research, so they let her name it. And she called it BRCA, which you might think stands for breast cancer, but Mary also knows that it stands for Berkeley, Califor-

nia. As a Promethean, she sees nature as having bequeathed us breast cancer, and herself as a hunter of the cause of that disease—its genes—and as entitled to discover the switch that controls that gene and the way to turn that switch off. She, then, can bring mankind, or mostly womankind, the gift of freedom from breast cancer. There are many scientists with her spirit in the world of medical research. They speak using the imagery of war, and there is right now in their field an apocalyptic mood with regard to 'emerging viruses', which is a bit of a misnomer. These viruses have in fact been around for a long time, but as humans go into different parts of the world where they have not been before, into environments within which they are, so to speak, biological strangers, they are being infected—colonized, perhaps, from the microscopic point of view—by viruses against which they have few or no defenses. Many virologists see the Ebola outbreak of a few years back as merely a harbinger of things to come. There are other more serious diseases today. So perhaps we need Prometheans among us to wage that battle. This is one way in which the human spirit transcends the stage of evolutionary development in which it finds itself.

The second way in which we seek freedom from the constraints of the human condition is to come to terms with suffering. The book of Job asks what it means to suffer. We don't know exactly what disease Job suffered from, but we do know that he felt trapped in a painful body and did not know what that meant. And yet he had faith. He said, 'I was born naked and I will die naked. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' There is a kind of acceptance which is not at all Promethean. He doesn't conquer or seek to conquer his condition, but only seeks to understand its role in God's creation. His spirit transcends the suf-

fering of his body.

When we think of salvation—whose root '*salv*' contains the idea of healing—we think of it as bringing the dead or near-dead back to life or health; the Christian examples would be the healing miracles of Jesus. But for those who suffer, to whom healing doesn't come, what is salvation? I think it lies in that aspect of the human spirit which transcends the body and its pains, which is not snuffed out by pain or sickness. That is a kind of transcendence which is only experienced by the individual (and not every individual) and which is sometimes witnessed in others. Paul Tillich refers to it, I think, when he speaks of 'the courage to be.'

The promise of the Christian gospel is that God has the power to heal not only our bodies (from the outside, in the form of medical or other treatment), but also our souls (from the inside, which medicine finds harder to achieve). Indeed, in the Christian paradigm, physical death is not the end of the individual. Starting from Jesus' resurrection, the Christian works back to the power behind that resurrection and believes that this same power can heal the suffering Christian from within, and even beyond physical death. That's another form of transcendence.

In conclusion, I find it interesting to see what we might learn about human nature from the concept of co-evolution at the level of the DNA. As we come to understand nature and evolution and our place within these greater realities more clearly, I think we will find great comfort in the realization that we are part of a great and ongoing drama in which death makes way for life, in which life forms continually modify one another and co-evolve together, and in which the transcendent spirit lives on, mysteriously, both in the individual and in nature, as an evolving, interdependent whole. □

Does God Really Listen to Our Prayers?

Swami Vivekananda says: 'Established in the idea of Mother, we can do anything. She quickly answers prayer. ... Reach a state where your very breathing is a prayer.'

Perception

DR SAIBAL GUPTA

(continued from the previous issue)

In order to conceive the nature of consciousness, studies have been extended even to the perceptive organs of simpler forms of life like paramecium, which is a unicellular organism. What has been realized is that without the knowledge of the nature of perception, no knowledge of Reality can be arrived at. Meanwhile, the applied sciences and technology continue to be utilitarian, bringing in new powers, and new frontiers for the exploration of the universe: something like the point of Euclid. Then why this quest for Reality? Why do we need it? Because that is the only way we can know ourselves and the universe we live in. Otherwise science will bring in only chaos. This does not mean that this quest is utilitarian. There is just no escaping from it because man is made that way. It is fundamental to his psyche and it determines his behaviour with respect to himself and the objective world. Without this he has no firm ground to stand on; he is helpless and insecure. This is as innate to man as any other instinct. It can be argued that this is not special to humans but a gradual evolution of the insecurity of an amoeba or a paramecium, so that it now grasps the universe. But still the argument remains that this in effect is an enlargement of perception. It is true that the quest is led and understood by a few *rishis* of physics and biology just as it was led by a handful of *rishis* in antiquity. But it affects all of us. An agnostic physicist listens to Beethoven's symphony in rapturous enjoyment and cannot understand why it is so, because he cannot do an algorithmic compression of the music and decide why and how the extra electrons entered his brain.

The question of brain brings us to the domain of biology. In biology as in physics,

man's quest has been progressively towards finding the basic truth, the final common denomination of life. On the way there have been enormous amounts of utilitarian spin-offs in the form of medicine, physiology, environment, bioindustry and even the world of fashion. But the main thrust is to get to the bottom of it all. It started with Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, where a commonality among the tremendous heterogeneity of life-forms was first established. From there onwards the quest led to the study of organs, then onto the individual cell, from the cell to the molecules which make it, and from there to the level of pure energy.

The search for consciousness in the human brain has really intensified in recent years with scientists from all disciplines joining in. This search has led to the ultrastructure of the neuron, the cells that the brain is made of. The number of neurons in a brain do not increase after it attains its full growth very early in life. While cells in most other parts of the body are replaced as we grow older, the cells in the brain are never replaced. So throughout our life what we call 'I' is really only our brain, since we are really not the same people insofar as our other body cells are concerned.

The ultrastructure of the neuron shows the presence of a cytoskeleton consisting of microtubules which are 25 nanometres in diameter on the outside and 14 nanometres in diameter on the inside. Each microtubule is made up of a protein polymer, which constitutes each subunit of the microtubules, which are known as 'tubulin'. Each tubulin is a dimer consisting of two distinctly separate units—alpha-tubulin and beta-tubulin, whose orientation depends on the electric charge or polar-

ity of the dimer. These microtubules occur in all nucleated cells on earth, which means, in all cells of the human or animal body up to the level of nucleated unicellular organisms like amoeba or paramecium. In paramecium, the microtubules extend beyond the cell wall as cilia for perceiving the environment and movement. The passage of small molecules through these microtubules and their movement is governed by alterations of electrical polarity inside the microtubules. This is to put it very grossly. The negative charge or the electron is the driving force of all cellular activities of life on earth. This is true from the use of cardiac Pacemakers to generation and transmission of nerve impulse.

As we know, the electrons are the most elusive elements of physical reality and cannot be comprehended or visualized individually. Although the cytoskeleton and microtubules are present in all the cells of the human body and govern their biochemical exchanges, they attain their highest development in the neurons. Here they extend from the dendritic or receiving end of the neuron, through the cell and all along its axon to the synaptic cleft, at the junction to the next neuron. That these are somehow connected to consciousness is suggested by the effect of anaesthetic drugs of varying chemical nature which blot out consciousness by their ability to change polarity or electron exchange or quantum coherence, whichever way one looks at it, in the microtubules. This of course, does not explain consciousness or perception but merely identifies the microtubule as a key player.

Attempts have been made to make computer models of the brain, incorporating increasing randomness in their function. Edelman and his colleagues constructed a series of devices known as Darwin I, II, III, IV and so on. These form the bases of artificial intelligence created by man. But these are nowhere near consciousness as Penrose has pointed out that the actual capabilities of even an ant seem to outstrip by far anything that has been achieved by standard procedures of artificial

intelligence. Cerebral activity or consciousness is non-computable by its very nature and even a quantum computer would not be able to perform the operations required for human conscious understanding. This is pure physics as put forward by Penrose. How far can one see through science as it is today? One can imagine a quantum coherence inside microtubules, a large-scale collective quantum phenomenon—perhaps of the nature of a Bose-Einstein condensate—in a sort of biological superconductor. A small quantum change can produce a cascade, which then collapses into classical neuronal activity. There is of course no guarantee that it will happen every time. It is possible to imagine this small quantum change to be endogenous through a sense organ or even exogenous through a strong electro-magnetic field. But this quantum-classical collapse or interface in neuronal activity is not understood and it is so even in pure physics. In brain activity it is more complicated, with the unknown but apparent process of selection at dendritic ends, multiple synapses with different neurons, presence of excitatory and inhibitory nerve impulses and so forth. 'Even if synaptic connections are controlled in some way by coherent quantum-mechanical effect it is hard to see how one could usefully consider a quantum super position consisting of one neuron firing, and simultaneously not firing.' This is quoted from Penrose. What would be needed is a new mathematics—a non-computational mathematics. That would be an event as big as the theory of relativity and dependent on perception. As Penrose himself says, 'The arguments from Godel's Theorem serve to illustrate the deeply mysterious nature of our mathematical perceptions. We do not "calculate", in order to form these perceptions, but something else is profoundly involved—something that would be impossible without the very conscious awareness, that after all, what the world of perception is about.' On the other hand, John D. Barrow says that 'any limitations of mathematical reasoning, like those uncovered by Godel, i

thus not merely limitations on our mental categories but intrinsic properties of reality and hence limitations upon any attempt to understand the ultimate nature of the universe.' So what is it going to be? Shall we perceive perception?

Both Einstein and Penrose have remarked that the natural laws, which we uncover, have been in existence long before man has known them and man has certainly not known all of them. Thus, the law of gravitation has existed long before Newton. Nature never disobeys its laws, never acts randomly, and within the boundaries of its own laws, it makes things work so beautifully—from microcosm to macrocosm, from physics to biology. Einstein calls this cosmic intelligence and Penrose says the same but in a different language, because he is an agnostic. Both agree that the great game of physics is to unravel this intelligence. Advaita Vedanta also says the same thing but only adds that even a single individual can establish his connection to this cosmic intelligence through refining and increasing his sense of perception because he is a part of it, or else he will not be in this universe. And how do we know that nature is so law-abiding and regular? Maybe that is how it wants to appear to our senses. Maybe it has an equal degree of arbitrariness. Maybe it looks rational when we are looking at it rationally. It collapses into rational reality with our act of observation—not only here and now but also in the distant reaches of the universe in space and time. That is what quantum principle states. As Paul Davis says, science may be merely an act of faith. It is also possible that it is completely rational but with a different kind of rationality—the kind that transports us to another world on listening to a Beethoven symphony. How would we know unless we go there? And the great message of the Upanishads is that it is possible to go there.

Since it all boils down to perception, let us look at perception itself. A paramecium can perceive its immediate environment and respond to it and even learn from its experience.

But its environment certainly does not include the cosmos. The process of evolution can then be seen as an evolution of consciousness, at the present end point of which is man whose perception involves himself and the entire cosmos and everything in it. Is it possible that in the future there will be another being with a much higher sense of perception who can see beyond what we can see? Scientists and thinkers like Arthur Eddington and Julian Huxley in earlier parts of this century have ruled out the possibility of another product of evolution in the foreseeable future, since man himself is evolving and evolving rather rapidly. Man's consciousness has been evolving very rapidly over the last few centuries. This rapid transformation would not have been possible without a conscious participation in evolution. A definite example is the uncertainty principle and its definite influence on human thought process in all walks of life in this century. Does that mean that man can voluntarily increase his powers of perception and thereby evolve rapidly in consciousness? Yes seems to be the obvious answer. If it happens collectively, can it also happen individually? Again the answer has to be yes, because the collective consists of individuals and individuals make up the collective. In every age, only a few individuals form the cutting edge of society and the rest follow suit at a variable gap. Does that mean that an individual can, in his small lifetime, increase his own power of perception to go beyond the limits of what we today call rationality? We are on dangerous ground now but we have to accept it as far as possible. A description of a daily ordinary life today would have been called fictitious even one or two centuries back. Even in leading that ordinary life we utilize only a minuscule portion of our cerebral power. By conscious effort to utilize the dormant areas of the brain can we take our level of perception beyond the time-space constraint within which our laws of causality operate? Its proof has to be beyond the realm of mathematics, in the realm of experience. For it is beyond the level of perception that Poincare

or Penrose talked about. If theirs is a perception of the greatest harmony at the most, this one must be an even greater sense of the harmony of the universe. It is not our intention to get into metaphysics but let us judge its probability by our ideas of rationality. Time is intimately connected with human consciousness. We can perceive time flowing. But according to the theory of relativity, time and space are interchangeable. We should therefore also perceive space as flowing, but we don't. Einstein must have perceived space as flowing or its possibility in perception as a logical deduction. While on Einstein, let us consider the EPR (Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen) Paradox — the non-locality of two events in space, which are simultaneous and interdependent. If non-locality can occur in space, it can also occur in time. Therefore what is in the future may well be in the past or present. In fact, perfectly logical theories of quantum reality have been put forward on this assumption by Aharonov and Vaidman, Costa de Beauregard and Werbos. After all, there is no such thing as the present—is it this second, this minute, this day or this century? In fact, with our ordinary senses we can never perceive the present. Between the time that a photoflash goes off and we blink, the picture has already been taken. A man who dies in between will never know that his photograph has been taken. So it is with most of our perceptions. It is our perception that gives the tense and perceptions vary.

Let us now look at the evidence. Perception is possible with intelligent deductions in a few—after all not everyone becomes Jules Verne or Victor Hugo. However, there are perceptions, which bear no resemblance to contemporary knowledge or experience. Our Puranas are full of such examples, as indeed are some of the old mythologies in other cultures. But only one example will be sufficient. In the last part of the *Mahabharata*, both Arjuna and Ashwatthama fired their ultimate weapons in anger and the burning arrows went up into the sky, ready to fall to the earth. Gods were alarmed that creation would be de-

stroyed and asked both of them to control their weapons. Arjuna controlled his weapon but Aswatthama said that he had no control over his weapon. A situation like this did indeed happen in the sixties during the Cuban crisis. America had the capability to destroy its ICBM in flight but Russia with its polar ICBM carrying MIRV and multiple nuclear warheads did not have the capability to destroy them in flight. This story could not have any bearing with contemporary experience. 'Arrows once shot do not come back' is a proverb in every language including ours from very ancient times.

Two of Swami Vivekananda's written remarks come to mind. He had written that the ancient Sumerian civilization was an extension of the contemporary Indian civilization long before the discovery of Indian teakwood in the ruins of the ancient Sumerian port city of Ur. In 1895 he wrote to Sister Christine that the working class would rise to power in Russia and then in China. He wrote the same thing to Hem Chandra Ghosh in a separate letter. Even Marx thought that the communist revolution could only occur in industrialized countries like Germany and England, and the Bolshevik Party was not even in existence then. There are many such recorded and unrecorded examples.

Is it possible to train the mind to greater perception? As has been said already, we normally use only a small portion of our brain in our usual life, just as we use only one half of one lung and less than one half of our kidneys. People can train their organs and muscles to become super athletes. Everybody cannot be an Olympics champion but everybody can go some distance on the way to becoming a champion and nobody knows who can ultimately become a champion. Similarly it is possible to exercise with the brain to increase its powers of perception. Voluntary control of autonomic nervous system is well known and so is conscious withdrawal from the sensory world. There are many people who have seen or heard of such things. But even such will-power, power of the conscious mind, faith,

conviction are not ends in themselves, but only means to an end. Perception can be increased to go beyond time and space. What happens then I do not know, but I would imagine a beauty and harmony beyond imagination. It would seem quite plausible for Valmiki to write *Ramayana* before Rama is born because time itself collapses. Plato had called this stage unattainable but Sri Ramakrishna and Advaita Vedanta say this is attainable—it is an act of faith to pursue it. It is a personal choice whether or not to pursue it—a neo-existentialist choice. But one has to give up a lot in its pursuit—restrain the power of the senses, give up lust, ambition, and ego—as Spinoza has said. One has to make the mind uncluttered, so that the subliminal self can take over. The pursuit of theoretical physics also needs a lot of sacrifices. It is much easier to make an invention and earn money, name and fame. One does not know when one starts whether he will reach anywhere in theoretical physics. That is why in the matter of perception our scriptures say, '*nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*', this Atman is not to be attained by the weak.' Lots of people fall by the wayside—sannyasins or not is another matter. But there is a great deal of beauty even on the way. As Rabindranath Tagore had written, 'My joy is in walking down the path.' There is a great deal of beauty in physics—those who trundle the road do it for joy and beauty. One cannot criticize the other's act of faith.

I had once asked my guru Swami Bhuteshananda Maharaj: 'What is the use of all this religiosity? We have followed this path for thousands of years but it has only brought us misery, foreign domination, defeat in every endeavour, unparalleled social and religious exploitation. What is the point in following a path so difficult, a goal so unattainable? What have we gained?' He said, 'Nothing. You do not gain a thing. Why are you so interested in all these efforts to know the Reality? What do you gain?' I was silent. It is true, an ordinary doctor like me, what did I have to gain? A few days later, when we were alone, he com-

plained of too much pain in his osteo-arthritic knee and said that he found it very difficult to walk. I said, 'But you *have* to walk. Otherwise it will get even worse.' He smiled and said, 'It is then like the quest of the Absolute. You do not gain a thing if you have it, but if you do not have it you lose a lot.' This is what is known as transmission of perception. But I was wrong in one thing. We have not pursued the Truth for thousands of years. Shortly after its revelation in written form brahmins captured it and the non-brahmin castes and women were debarred from its study. It was probably caused by the possibility of material gain from a generally pious society. Because of this wrong use it went into disrepute. Sankaracharya brought it out of darkness but could not give it to the masses. It remained in the hands of the brahmins. But the urge remained in the masses as is there everywhere in the world. This led to a proliferation of the bhakti cults with its attendant rituals which the modern mind of rationality so abhors. But it is all the same: it is an act of faith, faith so beautifully displayed in the agnostic physicists like Penrose and Feynman. It remained for Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to break all the shackles of superstition and make it available to everybody irrespective of religion, caste, creed, colour, calling, sex, wealth, education, intellect; irrespective of whether one follows jnana, bhakti, karma, or raja yoga; whether you are a monist or a dualist or whether you are a monk or a householder. This is a revolution. Barriers have been broken and what was there for thousands of years has been bequeathed to the entire humanity. It had to be done through the life of one man. That is why Sri Ramakrishna is an avatar, an incarnation.

So far this has been written as a self-testing, to check whether I have understood, even partially, the new Upanishad of the third millennium. Upanishads are really the thesis. They start off by saying that what is being sought to be described is beyond description, indescribable. And then they go on to discuss through

contemporary scientific and other knowledge, similes of social scenes, etc to convey the perception that is not describable. Even that scientific knowledge was not meagre in antiquity if one reads through the cosmology of *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, converting the similes to contemporary terms. This new Ramakrishna Upanishad I am talking about is a fitting gift to the third millenium of the Christian era, for it is the dialectic conflict of the duality of Christianity and the rationality of science that has caused such tremendous development in science and technology and increased the consciousness of man. It has all got to come together now. Dualism is the creative force, Advaita is perception, presence, silence. A man who has Perception moves from one to the other.

I shall end by quoting the letter from Prof John Wheeler mentioned in the first part of this article. He wrote the letter to Swami Jitatmananda of the Ramakrishna Mission of which I have a copy and permission to reproduce. The letter goes thus:

My wonderful mentor, Niels Bohr, had gone into deep interest into the Upanishads—more, he told me, in the questions than in the answers. I like to think that someone will trace out how the deepest thinking of India made its way to Greece and from there to the philosophy of our times.

The Professor at Copenhagen whom Niels Bohr most admired, who was his teacher and subsequent occupant of the

House of Honour that Bohr himself was to occupy, was Herald Hoffding. In an evening dialogue between Heisenberg and Bohr at that House of Honour about the uncertainty principle, Hoffding put his finger on the diagram between the double entrance slit and the terminating photographic plate and asked, 'Where can the electron be said to be?' Bohr's reply is immortal: 'To be? To be? To be? What does it mean "to be"?''

Your wonderful analysis of the great questions inspires us all in the great search that follows the spirit of the Upanishads, of Plato's *Dialogues* and modern science.

Really, what is it to be? Is it to be or not to be or is it to be and to be and to be and to be? There is no negation here. There is no other way but to be. If one can use a term mentioned by Abner Shimony, quoting from Whitehead, in the famous seminar with Penrose, Hawking and Cartwright, the protomentality inherent in every particle of this universe is asking it to be, asking us to be. The entire physico-chemico-biological evolution of the universe is asking us to be. If there are other universes, other life-forms with different chemical compositions, it is still the same. As I sit and wonder in unison with the sea of consciousness, and before my mind blows into oblivion and merges in It, the only word I can say is WOW—or is it OM? This world is neither illusion nor reality, as we understand them, but is beyond them both. □

Does God Really Listen to Our Prayers?

Sri Ramakrishna replies: 'God will certainly listen to your prayers if you feel restless for Him. He is our own Father, our own Mother. ... We can force our demand on Him. Surely. I can assure you of that a hundred times. But the prayer must be genuine and earnest. ... It must be a sincere prayer. God is our Inner Controller. He will certainly listen to our prayer if it is sincere. ... Is anything impossible for the grace of God? Suppose you bring a light into a room that has been dark a thousand years; does it remove the darkness little by little? The room is lighted all at once. One should pray to God with sincere longing. God cannot but listen to prayer if it is sincere.'

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

Maharaj, I have read somewhere that when the proper time comes, the guru himself will cut personal bonds with his disciple and bring about an impersonal relationship. What does this mean?

This means that though both the guru and the disciple are human beings, interpersonal relationships are to be transcended in order that the disciple should reach the goal. Impersonal relationship means that the guru is not just a human being but the embodiment of an ideal. The disciple too has the potential of attaining to this ideal. Sri Ramakrishna has said that in good time the mind itself starts functioning as the guru. This is because the guru helps the disciple to manifest the latent possibilities in him; when those possibilities become manifested, the guru turns impersonal. A real guru will always help the disciple to stand on his own feet. Swami Saradanandaji had remarked once that each and every problem should not be referred to the guru. The disciple should himself try to resolve them by thinking deeply. How else can one become self-reliant! Many a time we are left with no choice but to find solutions to our problems on our own.

Maharaj, what is the significance of the Bengali saying 'Gaṅgā jale gaṅgā pūjā'?

Goddess Ganga is worshipped with the water taken from the river Ganga itself and hence the saying, 'worshipping Ganga with Ganga water.' When you worship God, the

flowers you offer to Him are His creation; they are His flowers. The eatables offered to Him are His own. Finally, the devotee who worships Him also is His.

What is the necessity of temples? Why should we go to the temple when we can pray at home itself?

Praying at home as well as going to the temple—both are good. Everything depends on the mind. He who can concentrate his mind sitting at home has no need to go anywhere. However, a devotee always aspires to visit the places of God's sport (*līlā*). India abounds in temples. Numerous temples are there all around but still new ones are coming up. Even without knowing the true significance of these temples, people build beautiful temples, guided by their devotional instincts. Temples, however, are not mere examples of art and architectural beauty. They are favourable places for contemplation on and worship of God. One should bear in mind that temples are the abodes of God. Swamiji said, 'Every day people go there, and the more they go the holier they get, and the holier that place becomes. If any man who has not much Sattva in him goes there, the place will influence him and arouse his Sattva quality. Here, therefore, is the significance of all temples and holy places, but you must remember that their holiness depends on holy people congregating there' [*The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 252]. Now you may ask: Can the omnipresent, all-per-

vading God be confined to a small place like the inner sanctum of the temple? No, He cannot be. He is everywhere and needs no room or temple for Him. But temples are necessary for us. By visiting a temple we are reminded of God. We feel inspired to lead holy lives. We remember the saints who have led wonderful lives in order to realize Him. We are purified by the holy atmosphere of the temple. We feel inclined to pray intensely at places where numerous people are praying with devotion. Our faith in God will increase.

Normally people visit various places—cinema houses, theatres, sports stadiums—for entertainment. But those who have tasted the nectar of religious life will visit temples and pray to God. Though God is omnipresent, just see how many devotees visit places of pilgrimage to pray to Him and chant His name! The favourable atmosphere on account of the glorious traditions of such places helps the devotee to easily direct his mind towards God. The devotee gets inspired by visiting holy places to perform spiritual practices. Moreover, temples are places where the troubled mind finds peace. God is specially present in places where His names and glories are sung and He is worshipped with devotion.

Upon his arrival in Benares, Sri Ramakrishna perceived that Shiva pervades everything there. Benares was so sacred to him that he could not defecate there; in order to do that, he would go out of Benares.

Some devotees spend heavily on ashramas or temples. This is good but such acts should be free of vanity. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that people always mention that Rani Rasmani built the Bhavatarini temple at Dakshineswar. They never say that the temple was built due to Her will.

Maharaj, are prayers on special days more effective?

We should pray to God everyday. When we fail to do that, we select some special days

to pray with the right attitude. Special days are important because of the ambience they create owing to the prayers of thousands of people. So prayers become more ardent.

Numerous desires are there in us; shall we not progress then? How to reduce desires?

If the mind goes towards objects of enjoyment, by consistent practise it can be controlled and purified. The mind is an expression of your nature; you can transform your nature by effort. Swami Turiyananda used to say that when we sit down for meditation, we should put up a sign 'No admittance' on the door of our mind. Without devotion to God it is not possible to bring the mind under control. Remembering God, we should advance with the power of our self-effort. We should be determined to win the battle of sadhana; come what may, let death come, but still we should not give up—we must progress with this attitude. We must be alert always, at all times. If we practise in this manner we shall succeed. There is, of course, the grace of God and people have been experiencing this. Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'The breeze of God's mercy is always blowing; unfurl your sails.' He also gives this example: 'This world is like a fishing-net. Men are fish, and God, whose maya has created this world, is the fisherman. When the fish are entangled in the net, some of them try to tear through its meshes in order to get their liberation. ... Most of the fish are trapped; but they are not conscious of the net and of their imminent death. No sooner are they entangled than they run headlong, net and all, trying to hide themselves in the mud.' [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 164-5].

We should bear this very clearly in mind that even householders can realize God. There are ways to come out of the net of the world and you should struggle to do so.

—compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Sri Sarada Devi's First Photograph

SWAMI SATTWANANDA

Which one was Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's first photograph? What follows is a new account which differs slightly from the available accounts on Holy Mother's first two photographs. Swami Sattwanandaji, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, wrote an article about this in the Bengali quarterly Nibodhata in January 1999. A revised version of that article, in free translation, is being published here. Footnotes in the original Bengali version have been incorporated into the body of the article, while new footnotes have been added.

I was at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Benares, around the year 1950 as a brahmacharin. In those days, revered Swami Arupananda (Rasbehari Maharaj) was staying at the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama there, in a first-floor room facing the Ramakrishna temple. Rasbehari Maharaj was a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order then. He had joined the Order in 1908. As an attendant of Holy Mother, he had been at her feet for several years; he had also stayed at Udbodhan, Calcutta, for a long time. He was close to Golap Ma and Yogin Ma, who were Holy Mother's companions. Owing to such contacts, he had heard directly from Holy Mother herself, and from these two attendants of hers, many incidents about her. Rasbehari Maharaj loved me very much. It was his practice to visit the Sevashrama almost everyday and have a short conversation with me. I too would go to the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama daily to offer prayers to Sri Ramakrishna in the temple. I would also make it a point to meet Rasbehari Maharaj there and talk to him.

One day I went to his room. He lay on his bed as he spoke to me that day. The topic of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi came up. Getting up from his bed, he took the photograph of Holy Mother that was kept in his personal altar in his hands, and said: 'This photograph in which Mother looks downwards is what I like most, and so I have placed it on my altar. This is Mother's second picture. Hope you

have heard this: it was owing to Mrs Bull's keen desire that she, along with Nivedita, arranged to take a few photographs of Mother with the help of a European photographer [Mr Harrington]. Holy Mother, however, would not at all agree to be photographed. Consequently, when Mrs Bull convinced her that she wanted Mother's picture as she would take it to America, keep it at home, and worship it, Mother agreed reluctantly. With the aid of Golap Ma, Nivedita and Mrs Bull, took Mother to the roof of the house. At that time, Holy Mother was deeply indrawn, and hardly did she have any awareness of the outer world. She was scarcely in a position to talk or express her opinions even. For the photograph, too, she like a machine did as Nivedita and the others told her; she sat the way they wanted her to sit.'

Rasbehari Maharaj then turned to the usually worshipped picture of Holy Mother, and said: 'Look here. Observe closely. Though her face is turned towards the camera, though her eyes are open, the mind appears to have gone somewhere else—her look is not at all towards the camera. We may call it a rather vacant look. Both Nivedita and Mrs Bull paid great attention to seat Mother properly, by arranging her sari, hands and feet in a particular fashion, so that the photograph might come out flawlessly well. I have heard that it was Nivedita who had pushed part of Mother's sari back so as to reveal the right arm, and

arranged her hair as it is seen in the picture. That was how the first photograph was taken—it is now worshipped everywhere.

'Soon after the photograph was taken, Mother regained external consciousness and said, "Golap, is it over?" She also wanted to get up. But as the photographer said that there was need of one more exposure, Holy Mother was requested to wait for a little more time. By this time, Mother's eyes fell on her right arm and, with her left hand, she pulled her sari to cover it. Owing to her natural qualities of modesty and shyness, she sat looking downwards, slightly altering the way she was made to sit before. If you see closely, you can observe that after she pulled her sari over her right arm, she could not arrange her fingers as Nivedita had set them before—they appear to be slightly jumbled. From then on, Holy Mother could not lift her face at all to look up towards the camera, and so the photographer had to snap the picture in that posture itself. You see, owing to her pulling the sari over her right arm with her left hand, the portion of the sari had got projected like this: >.'

As I said earlier, Rasbehari Maharaj was closely associated with Holy Mother and her attendants, Golap Ma and Yogin Ma. So, he might have heard about the photographs from them.

About these two photographs of Mother, a few persons have expressed their opinions in some journals before. Sri Pijush Kanti Roy had written about this in the Bengali journal of Sri Sarada Math, *Nibodhata*, some time back (see Poush 1394 BE, p. 188).¹ I read that article with interest, and also discussed the photographs with my old friend Sri Salil Gupta from Shillong (now deceased), who was a renowned photographer. Salil Gupta had told me: 'In those days, the "field camera" was in

use. In such a camera, for each exposure a separate plate or slide had to be loaded into a wooden frame. If one picture was taken, it had to be removed from the camera and another frame had to be placed in it. After this, keeping the photographer's object in view, the camera had to be covered with a black cloth; slowly and carefully, the covering of the photographic plate had to be pulled away; and the cap of the lens had to be undone to expose the film. In this type of camera there could be no way of taking snapshots.' So, Pijush Kanti Roy's idea in his article that 'Holy Mother glanced up, inquiring—"Is it over?" The alert photographer seized the golden opportunity and immediately got the second exposure effectively,' cannot be accepted. The reason is, if

we look at the picture that is popularly worshipped, we can clearly understand that it was not an instant picture; it was a photograph taken with great care and after meticulous arrangement, keeping many points in view.

Sri Pijush Kanti Roy's argument about the photograph which was the second one according to him is this: 'During the time while the camera was being prepared for the second shot

Mrs Bull and others must have observed that no part of the Mother's feet had been visible for the camera in the first exposure. After obtaining her consent, Mrs Bull must have arranged the Mother's sari in such a way as to make a little of her feet visible. With this improvement in the subject and the camera



1. An article by the same author was also published in *Prabuddha Bharata* under the title 'The Photographs of Holy Mother' (cf. *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1992, pp. 56-62). All quotations from Sri Pijush Kanti Roy, used in the present write-up, are from that article (p. 58).

having had time to complete his preparations, the taking of the second photograph was quickly accomplished.' This also does not stand to reason. According to the custom of photography, two exposures are always a must in the case of exceptional photographs, so as to ensure success. All sensible photographers know this. That was what happened, I think, here also. Mother's photographer was ready with plates—with slides loaded into frames in a dark room—so that he could take more than one photograph. We should remember that a dark room was imperative for loading such plates. So, the reason for the second picture was not Mother's feet being covered with cloth. One more argument is this: it is difficult to believe that the ever mindful and practical Nivedita and Mrs Bull, who were so intent upon the latter's taking Mother's photograph for worship to America, would forget to reveal the holy feet of Mother. The main purpose of taking Mother's photograph was only this: to worship her feet.

Yet another point needs to be stressed here. Sri Pijush Roy says in his article: 'Another slightly different version is recorded by Brahmachari Akshaya Chaitanya, a disciple of the Holy Mother, in his book *Sri Sri Sarada Devi*. He writes that he was personally told by Golap Ma that Mrs Bull requested Holy Mother to sit for one more exposure since a little more arrangement of her clothing was necessary.' The first part of this sentence is all right, because both Mrs Bull and the cameraman knew that to be sure two photographs would have to be taken, and the cameraman was accordingly ready with two plates. But Holy Mother did not know about it and wanted to get up. Therefore Mrs Bull requested her to sit for a little while more. [Now,

this evidently proves that Sri Pijush Roy's idea, quoted earlier, that the alert photographer 'got the second exposure effectively' when Mother lifted her head, is not quite correct.] The reason for the second photograph was not Mother's feet being covered; Golap Ma too did not say any such thing personally to Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya. Probably this is Sri Pijush Kanti Roy's inference only.

One thing has to be noted here. Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya met Holy Mother for the first time, according to his own reminiscences of her, in December 1918 and got spiritual initiation from her. This was only a year and a half before Mother's passing away.² He saw Holy Mother at Udbodhan only four times in all. Nowhere is it written

that he had come in contact with Golap Ma. Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya came over to Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Benares, in 1922; two years later, Golap Ma passed away in Calcutta. From his writings it is not clear whether Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya had either directly or indirectly heard from Golap Ma about Mother's photographs. He has not mentioned that he had directly heard from Go-



lap Ma. On the contrary, the language he uses there adds to the doubt that he was not giving a firsthand account. What is very interesting is that the first edition of his book, *Sri Sri Sarada Devi*, was published in 1937. In this or in its three subsequent editions, there is not even a mention about the reason for taking the second photograph. It was only in the fifth edition, brought out in 1965, that a footnote to the

2. Cf. Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya in *Sri Sri Mayer Padaprante* (Bengali), ed. Swami Purnatmananda (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1997), Vol. 3, pp. 562-6.

effect that the second picture was taken so that the feet might be visible, was added. Now, by that time Swami Arupananda had passed away (he passed away in 1957). So he was not aware of Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya's footnote. It can therefore be surmised that Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya had not heard about this from Golap Ma. But Sri Pijush Roy says in his article that Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya was personally told by Golap Ma about Mother's photographs!³ This is not correct because Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya has written in the footnote of his book: 'Many have heard this from the lips of Golap Ma.' He did not write that he was personally told by Golap Ma [vide Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya, *Sri Sri Sarada Devi* (1396 BE, eleventh edition), p. 65].

Thus, it is clear that the photograph wor-

shipped everywhere is Holy Mother's first photograph, and in it her feet are visible. I think there is no room for doubt here. When Mother became aware of the surroundings, she became extremely shy and pulled her sari over her right arm; at the same time she must have covered her feet too—as it is seen in the photograph in which she looks downwards. It is also possible that owing to Mother's re-positioning herself, the feet got covered; it could not be Mrs Bull's or Nivedita's error.⁴

In conclusion, I wish to say that there have been some varying opinions in this matter. To keep readers apprised of all points, I thought I should say what I had heard from revered Swami Arupananda, along with what I myself understand to be correct. It is left to the readers to arrive at a conclusion. □

3. Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata* (January 1992, p. 58) and *Nibodhata* (Poush 1394 BE, p. 191).

4. Sister Nivedita was present during the entire event of photographing Holy Mother. In her famous work, *The Web of Indian Life*, Nivedita writes about this incident without mentioning Holy Mother's name: '...I saw an extraordinary instance of it when a friend, the shyest of orthodox women, consented to have her photograph taken for one who begged it with urgency. She stipulated, naturally, that it should be done by a woman. But this was found to be impossible. "Then let it be an

Englishman," she said with a sigh, evidently shrinking painfully from the idea of a man, yet feeling that the greater the race-distance the less would be the impropriety. The morning came, and the Englishman arrived, but in the Indian gentlewoman who faced him there was no trace of self-consciousness or fear. A superb indifference carried her through the ordeal, and would have been a sufficient protection in some real difficulty.' Cf. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 28.

Does God Really Listen to Our Prayers?

Says the book, *The Cloud of Unknowing*: 'Imagine that in the dead of night you heard your worst enemy cry out with his whole being 'Help!' or 'Fire!' Would you not be moved to compassion by the agony of that cry and rush to help him? My God! If grace can so transform a mere man to where he can forget his hatred and have such compassion for his enemy, what shall we not expect from God when he hears a person cry out to him from the height and depth and length and breadth of his whole being. Surely then we can confidently hope in Him.'

A Strange Incident!

SISTER DEVAMATA

Sister Devamata was an American admirer of Swami Vivekananda who lived in Madras for some time under the guidance of Swami Ramakrishnananda. We publish excerpts with some slight remodelling from Devamata's Days in an Indian Monastery to commemorate the birth anniversary of Ramakrishnananda, which will be celebrated on the 29th of this month.

In Madras, they had hired a large house for me obliquely across from the monastery; but at the last moment illness had prevented the former tenants from moving out. So I lived at a schoolhouse for more than a month. Later, my house was ready. The anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was approaching and Swami Ramakrishnananda chose that as an auspicious day for my moving.

The house was far too spacious for my needs. There was a great banyan tree outside, the branches of which curved up over the tiled roof and spread out on either side, creating a green bower. The floor of the tree, where the main branches stretched at right angles to re-root, and the floor of my verandah were on a level and the living things that flew and ran round in the tree—chameleons, chipmunks, crows, sparrows and other birds, were my comrades.

There are no set seasons for the vegetation in South India. Every tree has its own time for changing leaves. The banyan gets its fresh leaves in April and they are a great temptation to the poor for their goats and cows. They also make plates of them. Without meaning to, I grew to be the protector of the banyan beside my door-court. When I saw men stripping whole branches of their new leaves and making them wither for lack of sufficient breathing surface, I would drive them away by clapping my hands and calling in Tamil: 'Go! Go! I will call the police.'

One afternoon I was sleeping when I

heard the call of 'Mother,' 'Mother.' I jumped up and ran to the front door and the back gate. There was no one. I looked again, still no one. Then going out on my verandah, I saw a man in the tree with his cloth full of fresh leaves. In the evening when I went to the monastery I told Swami Ramakrishnananda of the incident and asked him if he knew who had called me. 'The tree,' was his answer. And he continued: 'You were sleeping, your subconscious mind was uppermost, so you were able to hear the appeal of the tree for protection.' It seemed a matter of course to him. He used to say that 'plants were conscious animals without the power of locomotion.'

'In India nature is our mother and father,' Ramakrishnananda declared. 'We have been able to commune with nature as with our own mother and so we boldly give out that the whole universe is living. Western thinkers think that only when a nation is in a baby condition, it has a tendency to personify everything and that that is the reason why in the Vedic period they saw mountains, rivers, etc, as living entities. But this is a foolish blunder. It requires great purity and insight to be able to see the workings of nature and perceive life and intelligence in every part of her. The whole universe is bristling with omniscience. To an ordinary man this may appear to be a dead, soulless universe, but that man who has the inner eye opened sees that the whole universe is palpitating with life.' □

Fate and Self-Effort

We thank our readers for their impressive response to our March 2000 invitation to discuss whether fate is powerful or self-effort. It is so encouraging to know that doctors and engineers, managers and advocates, students and teachers—readers from every field (from 12-year-old Shameek to 90-year-old Sri Achutha Menon) think so seriously about important questions in life. Most responses were naturally in favour of self-effort. But some cited instances to stress that fate has an important role to play in our lives. A few, however, weren't in favour of either. Now, time is short. We are the makers of our own destiny. As they say, God's grace too comes in the form of self-effort. So let us work hard towards self-improvement.

We were faced with one difficulty: what can be done when everyone writes well? We simply couldn't decide which ones to publish and which ones to omit!

Sri T.A. Menon (64), a corporate advisor from Cochin, feels that 'the genes, chromosomes, *gunas*, and environment, all obey the astonishingly comprehensive and precise eternal laws of nature that govern the infinite universe.' We think of self-effort 'because we refuse to look within and recognize that which engender our apparent volitions, desires and responses.' He concludes that when things are favourable, we assign them to self-effort but when they are unfavourable, we assign it to

fate.

Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee (65) from Calcutta, however, says: 'Fate, represented by one's stars, genes, past karma, or whatever, is a meaningless notion. If fate decides everything, what decides fate? In life, nothing is more potent than self-effort.' He has his reasons for this: 'Every moment—even while opening an umbrella or whisking away a fly we exercise self-effort.'

Sri Anadi Nath Mukherjee (83) from

Among the other excellent respondents were

Sri Abhijit Baidya, West Bengal; Sri C. Achutha Menon, Calicut; Sri Ambarish Bose, Mumbai; Sri Asoke Kumar Sanyal, Agarpara; Sri Ashit Kumar Dey, Calcutta; Sri Atmaprakash Nayak, Orissa; Sri Avijit Dutta, Calcutta; Sri Balaram Krishna Banerjee, Calcutta; Sri C.U. Bhaskar, Bangalore; Sri Birupaksha Sanyal, Rourkela; Sri Bishnu Sankar Verma, 99 APO; Sri R. Chandra Sekhar Gupta, Kadiri; Sri Chinmoyee Prasanna Ghosh, Midnapore; Sri D.N. Raina, New Delhi; Sri D. Buxey, Mumbai; Sri Debabrata Sanyal, Jalpaiguri; Sri Debabrata Barman, Calcutta; Dr G.V. Sitaramayya, Tirupati; Dr Gour Gopal Bhuniya, Midnapore; Sri P. Govindarajan, Bangalore; Sri Hemendra N. Vyas, Rajkot; Smt Indrani Balu, Bangalore; Sri Y. Kumaraswamy, Karnataka; Sri K.V. Nageswara Rao, Hyderabad; Sri K.V. Pillai, Chennai; Sri Krishna Murari Rastogi, Lucknow; Sri L.N. Dube, Vidisha; Sri Lal Singh Chuphal, Pithoragarh; Sri Lalit Madhab Ray, Orissa; Sri Madan Mohan Chatrabasi, Calcutta; Sri P.N. Murty, Vishakhapatnam; Sri Neelakanth Krishnaji Kulkarni, Belgaum; Sri M.D.N. Prabhakar, Bagalkot; Sri P.K. Mukherjee, Calcutta; Sri P.S. Savedkar, Ahmednagar; Sri P.N. Bhandarkar, Pane Mangalore; Sri Prathapa Reddy, Tirupati; Sri Pushpa Kumar Pal, Calcutta; Sri K. Ramakrishnan, Kumbakonam; Sri S. Ramakrishnan, Moodabidri; Sri Raghavendra Garde, Pune; Sri Ram Charitra, Bihar; Smt Rama Varma, Delhi; Sri V. Ramamurthy, Tumkur; Sri Ranjan Kanti Bagchi, Calcutta; Sri N. Ramananda Rao, Kollam; Sri Raunak Kundu, Andul; Sri Ritesh Vatrana, Abohar; Dr S. Bandyopadhyay, Khargapur; Sri N.N. Sachdeva, Indore; Sri S. Nanda; Sri Shameek Ghosh, Calcutta; Sri Shiva Dass Kashyap, Bareilly; Dr Shrinivas Gadhinglajkar, Kerala; Sri Sreeraj Roy, New Delhi; Sri Subrata Kumar Ghosh, Calcutta; Sri P. Subba Rao, Hyderabad; Sri Supratim Nandan, West Bengal; Sri Suresh Chandra Gupta, New Delhi; Sri T.K. Naha Biswas, Calcutta; Sri Tarnindar Singh, Mumbai; Sri B. Venkateswara Rao, Khammam; Sri G. Venkateswara Rao, Vijayawada.

Ranchi says in favour of fate: 'Success is elusive without self-effort, but often the best of self-effort fails to achieve success. In the ultimate analysis the answer to the problem posed is, self-effort to be fruitful needs the blessings of fate. In this sense fate is powerful.'

Tanusree Ghosh (21), a student from Calcutta, asks like many others: 'What is fate other than the fruits of our past deeds? And all deeds are the result of self-effort. So fate is nothing but the result of self-effort.'

Ms Madhumita Ghose (25) of Korean Airlines says that fate is more powerful because, 'The fruits of our efforts are not in our hands. They are reserved in the store of our fate. Sometimes, even without making any effort we either enjoy or suffer.'

As if in answer to this, **Sri Anantha Krishna** (53), a deputy general manager from Hyderabad, says: 'Putting effort is our duty. Results may be immediate or time-taking. And results depend upon many factors than our own effort. What those factors are it is very difficult to know.'

For **Jordi Vilamajo Gasia** (27), a production engineer from Spain, self-effort is the final thing: 'When we are born, life situates each one of us in different starting points and spreads in front of us the way to follow throughout our lives. But this way is not a simple one, it has different junctions for everyone and can lead to many different destinations. It's completely left to us to choose the way and the goal.'

Sri Madan Mohan Roy (60) from Hooghly puts it beautifully: 'Effort is the seed and fate is the harvest.'

Smt Radha Chaklader (60) from Vancouver supports fate when she says: 'I think fate is the outline of life and self-effort gives it shape, colour, character, achievement and what not. Everything is driven by fate. From the spiritual point of view, fate and self-effort are interdependent, fate being the dominant factor. If fate does not favour, then opportunities for self-effort do not come by, the motivation being absent.'

Smt Nalini Bhat from Mangalore says, '*Prarabdha* is unavoidable. Every work has its result. It is like action and reaction. Actually karma or action is neutral; the motive behind it is what gives results, either good or bad. Hence self-effort is more important.'

Miss Seema Mandavia from Junagadh puts the same idea in different words when she says, 'In my opinion both fate and self-effort are powerful as they are not opposite poles or two separate entities but just the two sides of the same coin.'

Sri Partha Sarathi De (28) from Durgapur is firm when he says: 'Fate stops where self-effort begins. Self-effort is strength; fatalism, weakness. Self-effort is the monarch with fate its subjugated subject.'

From Orissa, **Sri Atmaprakash Nayak** (21) writes: 'Man is endowed with a free will and has intelligence and reason. His actions are guided by his intelligence. However, his freedom is restricted to the present only. He can't exercise his will in the past or in the future. Man can utilize his free will and make effort to shape his destiny.'

Ms P. Usha (39), a teacher from Bangalore, strikes a balance between fate and self-effort when she says: 'Man is endowed with intelligence and will-power. It is given to him to exercise these and direct his actions towards achieving his cherished goal. One cannot, however, deny the power wielded by the unseen hand of fate. There have been instances where all self-effort has been in vain; or we succeeded only in jumping from the frying-pan into fire! I dare say that self-effort is indispensable for any achievement, but wisdom lies in the wholehearted acceptance of what comes.'

Sri Bikash Kumar Mitra (35) of Indian Railways has an answer to this: 'Many a time it so happens that despite extreme, proper and purposeful effort we don't get the desired result and so we say that it is decided by fate. In reality, we may not be satisfied with the outcome at that juncture but the same result will turn out to be a boon in the future.'

According to **Dr K.M. Rastogi** (48), a reader in sociology from Rae Bareilly, 'Sitting idle and waiting for the fruition of fate is foolishness. Self-effort is a must for all.'

Mr B.K. Mittal (73) from Rishikesh says, 'It would be wise to depend on something which is known rather than on something unknown.'

Miss Gita Dave (47) from Howrah says that through self-effort 'one develops faith in oneself. It gives enormous strength.'

For **Dr Swayambhu Mukherjee** (51), a doctor from Calcutta, 'Self-effort alone is the maker of destiny. Fate is only a negative term that stays with failure. Fate denotes unrecognized causes of failure. Success or failure depends upon factors like sincerity, effectiveness, preparation, timing of execution, magnitude of expectations, etc.'

Sri Mahesh J. Ursekar (37), a software professional from Mumbai, asks: 'Is there such a thing as fate? Or is it an observation made after the passing of events?' He adds: 'Blaming fate for the state one is in may act as a fictitious balm to ease one's pain, but it is a definite deterrent to getting one out of the bad or painful situation.'

Sri R.B. Chore (73), Mumbai, feels: 'The correct thing for us to do is to forget the past and the future also, which we just cannot do anything about now. We should live in the present. So it is self-effort that makes life.'

Lt-Col R.K. Langar (63) from Jammu is of the opinion that those who believe in the supremacy of fate are inclined 'to look for excuses for their failures.' He feels that once we are born, 'we can carve out a future with our effort. Even those who believe in fate should also rely on self-effort.'

Sri Kalishankar Bhattacharya (68) from Burdwan feels that when we meet with failure we say it is owing to fate. 'Some say that success also comes through fate. In my opinion these are all idle talk. Fatalism leads to stagnation only. Stagnation is dying before death.'

Smt Indrani Sengupta (49) from Calcutta says: 'If we carefully look around, we will find that the "haves" think of self-effort as all-powerful while the "have-nots" bow down to the power of "fate" to console themselves.'

A student from Shimla, **Ms Anshu Sharma** (19) gives a poetic touch to the discussion: 'When a man is born, neither does he carry around his neck a pearl necklace nor does he have gold studded with diamonds. He only carries the necklace of past karmas and *samskaras*. These karmas and *samskaras* do not leave a person no matter where he lives. What he has sown he has to reap, in this birth or the next.' So we should be up and doing.

Sri Vivek Kapadia, an engineer from Gandhinagar, concludes: 'Self-effort brings two categories of results : one that falls within the scope of our analytical capability, and the other beyond that. The first leads to the cause-and-effect relationship between effort and its fruit, while the other forms a domain where the cause-and-effect relationship is never known, and so is termed as fate. Thus fate is the stored-up potential that can lead to fruition upon maturity. Therefore fate is powerful. However, since fate and its effect are both produced by self-effort, self-effort is power itself, as it were. So fate is powerful, and self-effort is the power behind.'

Fate and Self-Effort

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The doctrine of reincarnation asserts the freedom of the soul. Suppose there was an

absolute beginning. Then the whole burden of this impurity in man falls upon God. The all-

merciful Father responsible for the sins of the world! If sin comes in this way, why should one suffer more than another? Why such partiality, if it comes from an all-merciful God? Why are millions trampled underfoot? Why do people starve who never did anything to cause it? Who is responsible? If they had no hand in it, surely, God would be responsible. Therefore the better explanation is that one is responsible for the miseries one suffers. If I set the wheel in motion, I am responsible for the result. And if I can bring misery, I can also stop it. It necessarily follows that we are free. There is no such thing as fate.

There is nothing to compel us. What we have done, that we can undo. ... You know it already that each one of us is the effect of the infinite past; the child is ushered into the world not as something flashing from the hands of nature, as poets delight so much to depict, but he has the burden of an infinite past; for good or evil he comes to work out his own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of karma. Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes.

If you ask the young man with whom life is successful, he will declare that it is real; and he really thinks so. Perhaps, when the same man grows old and finds fortune ever eluding him, he will then declare that it is fate. He finds at last that his desires cannot be fulfilled.

Wherever he goes, there is an adamant wall beyond which he cannot pass. Every sense-activity results in a reaction.

Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest as when all responsibility is thrown upon ourselves. I challenge everyone of you. How will you behave if I put a little baby in your hands? Your whole life will be changed for the moment; whatever you may be, you must become selfless for the time being. You will give up all your criminal ideas as soon as responsibility is thrown upon you—your whole character will change. So if the whole responsibility is thrown upon our own shoulders, we shall be at our highest and best; when we have nobody to grope towards, no devil to lay our blame upon, no Personal God to carry our burdens, when we are alone responsible, then we shall rise to our highest and best. I am responsible for my fate, I am the bringer of good unto myself, I am the bringer of evil. I am the Pure and Blessed One. We must reject all thoughts that assert the contrary. This, says the Vedanta, is the only prayer that we should have. This is the only way to reach the goal, to tell ourselves, and to tell everybody else, that we are divine. And as we go on repeating this, strength comes. He who falters at first will get stronger and stronger, and the voice will increase in volume until the truth takes possession of our hearts, and courses through our veins, and permeates our bodies. Delusion will vanish as the light becomes more and more effulgent, load after load of ignorance will vanish, and then will come a time when all else has disappeared and the Sun alone shines. □

A Great Queen

A pundit wrote a book in Sanskrit, praising the glories of Queen Ahalyabai Holkar. He came to the court one day and read the book before the assembly. Though Ahalyabai heard his reading with great attention, there were tears in her eyes. In a touching tone, she pleaded with the pundit, 'Venerable sir! Do you think I deserve all this praise? I am a poor, helpless creature. How wonderful it would have been had you used your poetic capability to praise God and His glories!' She, however, honoured the pundit by giving him suitable gifts. After he was gone, she threw away the book into the river Narmada.

A Preacher's Struggle

Swami Ramakrishnananda is called the messenger of Sri Ramakrishna to southern India. His superhuman struggles to spread spirituality are not much known. Here are a few instances selected from Swami Chetanananda's work, God Lived with Them.

With Swami Ramakrishnananda in mind, Swami Vivekananda had told his Madras admirers: 'I shall send you one who is more orthodox than your most orthodox brahmins of the South and who is at the same time incomparable in performing worship, scriptural knowledge, and meditation on God.' Ramakrishnananda arrived in Madras. At one time, he gave eleven classes a week in different parts of Madras, travelling by *jutka*, a narrow, uncomfortable, horse-drawn carriage. Sometimes he would return to the monastery after an exhausting day of classes and lectures to find that there was no food for supper.

One afternoon it was drizzling and the sky was overcast with clouds. A hackney carriage came in time to take the swami to his class. The swami asked a brahmacharin to accompany him that day. The carriage arrived in George Town, where the swami used to hold one of his classes. ... There was no one else in the room. The swami waited for about a quarter of an hour but no one turned up. He then opened his Upanishad and began to read and explain with all ardour and amiability. After an hour he stopped, closed his book and said to the brahmacharin, 'Well, let us go.' The brahmacharin followed him to the carriage which was waiting. On the way he asked the swami, 'How is it that you gave the class for fully one hour though nobody turned up?' The swami replied, 'I have not come to teach anybody. I only fulfill the vow I have taken.'

One summer morning Swami Ramakrishnananda returned from his classes by 10:30 am in a hackney carriage. After entering his room he stripped himself, sat on the edge of his cot and began to fan himself. Seeing him

in such a plight owing to the summer heat a brahmacharin began to fan him from behind. After a minute or so the swami threw away his fan and with clenched fists threw out his arms as if to fight with somebody. He began to say, 'It is for you that I suffer so much. See, what suffering I go through.' The next moment he fell flat on the floor with outstretched hands and joined palms, and began to rub his face on the carpet, saying, 'No brother, no brother, excuse me, excuse me. What you have done is perfect. It is all right, it is all right.' He got up with flowing eyes and blissful countenance and cast a divine look around before he sat again. All this was with Swami Vivekananda, who had sent him to Madras to live the life as moulded by Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Visuddhananda writes: 'Once I saw Swami Ramakrishnananda praying before an oil painting of Swami Vivekananda after his return from a lecture tour. I overheard his fervent prayers as he bowed down before him: "O my beloved brother, you are verily the accredited representative of Sri Ramakrishna and it is you who have sent me over here to propagate his message. I am only carrying out your commands. I beseech you to see to it that no pride or self-esteem enters my heart, no thirst for name or fame disturbs my mind. All the burden and the responsibility that you have placed on me are verily yours. Bless me so that I may carry on the work of our Master only as an instrument in his hands and that I may offer all the fruits of work unto him. Guide me always in the right path." What a glorious example of self-surrender and dedication to God and his work!' □

Homage to Swami Vivekananda

LOKAMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

Here is the homage of a great patriot of India to Swami Vivekananda. In his editorial on 8 July 1902 in Kesari (Marathi), Lokamanya Tilak paid a glowing tribute to Swamiji on hearing the news of his passing away on 4 July. A slightly edited version of that homage, translated and sent by Sri S.V. Sahasrabuddhe, Pune, is being published below.

On hearing the news of Srimat Swami Vivekananda's passing last Friday at Belur Math, Calcutta, thousands of people who foster deep sympathy for the Hindu religion would not but be sad. There will be only a few Hindus who may not be acquainted with the name of Srimat Swami Vivekananda. The nineteenth century has been considered as a century of immense progress in the physical sciences. During the latter half of that century, to enlighten the intellectuals of western nations about the spirituality that was commonplace in India since thousands of years ago; to acquaint them regarding the uniqueness of that spiritual science; and to awaken in them sympathy for the people of this nation in which such a science had developed, is not a trifling job. The inflow of western physical sciences along with English education was so forceful that, to reverse it, the appearance of a person of extraordinary courage and intellect was required. The Theosophical Society had started this work even before Swami Vivekananda, but it was Swami Vivekananda who gave their work a Hindu form; this is an indisputable fact. Presently the education which we get in our schools is only intellectual, and religious thoughts are not awakened in the minds of the students. On the contrary, they ridicule not only their own religion but Religion itself. Swami Vivekananda, during his boyhood days, had a similar tendency. Originally belonging to Bengal, presently he may be of 35-40 years of age. That means, the education he had received was that which was available about 20 years ago. By this readers

can easily imagine what that education must have been, because it would not be wrong to say that the English schools in Calcutta and those in Mumbai and Pune were more or less of a similar nature.

Swamiji's pre-monastic name was Narendra Sen [sic]; he was a kshatriya by caste. At the age of 18-19 he passed the BA examination from the University of Calcutta. He was fond of philosophy. In the beginning his tendency was more towards 'atheism' and in the course of discussion with many religious leaders he would make them nervous by asking the question, 'Have you seen God?' But ever since he came in contact with Srimat Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa a change came over him; at last he became the latter's favourite disciple, and later on a monk. The life of Sri Ramakrishna being very popular, Prof Max Muller has written a life in English. Sri Ramakrishna attained *mahasamadhi* in the year 1886. After him the work of preaching his Advaita doctrine was taken over by his disciples. Vivekananda introduced this doctrine to the American people. [Before going to America] during his wanderings, he had come to Pune in the year 1891-92. The idea of sending him to America first arose in Madras and people there helped him in this regard. In 1893, at the grand Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, all the credit of unfurling the flag of the Hindu's Advaita doctrine and taking it to the forefront goes to Swami Vivekananda.

Today the American continent means the very abode of all sciences. In such a country, before Christian religious leaders, the task of

propounding the doctrine of Advaita and making it popular could not have been accomplished by an ordinary person. Swami Vivekananda's opinion was that the truths of Hinduism are so great that it should be spread broadcast not only amongst Indians but also in other nations; and to do this was the duty of the Hindus. If at all anything remains as invaluable with the Hindus, it is their religion. If they give it up they would be making themselves the butt of the world's ridicule and criticism. 'Try to understand what Hindu religion is, study its fundamental truths, test them scientifically, and make your and your nation's name memorable.' Such words have fallen from his mouth many a time. He used to say that it is true that bhakti is an important trait of religion; but without the appendage of Advaita knowledge, it remains lame. He used to keep this truth in view while talking about other religions. He never said to the Christian to abandon his religion. 'You worship Christ, but as your religion is without a philosophy (*tattva jnana*), it becomes necessary to give it a touch of the Advaita doctrine of the Hindu religion' he felt. In short, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Raja Yoga, being the universal paths of the true religion, are not in conflict with any of the religions; not only this, these paths being worthy of everyone's use, he used to say that it is the duty of those who have got this knowledge through a lineage to spread them. Seeing Indians neglect their religion, he



Swami Vivekananda



Bal Gangadhar Tilak

was heartbroken; he was convinced that our country's development was not possible without the regeneration of our religion; and for this he struggled intensely. After starting his lineage of disciples and spreading the message of Advaita in America, on coming here, first of all he reached Madras through Ceylon. From there he went to Calcutta and then to the Himalayas where he has a monastery in Almora. In this journey he received tremendous ovation everywhere and the lectures which he delivered were inspiring. With the help of the Americans he established the Belur monastery on the banks of the Hooghly river, and made arrangements for moulding religious teachers according to our doctrine. Attached to this monastery, a temple has been consecrated to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. From Almora the *Prabuddha Bharata* journal used to be published; this journal was being brought out with the help of his friends. During the famine of 1896-97 the members of the Ramakrishna Mission went to Rajputana and stopped many destitute people from falling into the clutches of the Christian missionaries. Religious teachers should have been available in abundance; but lacking in disciples, and the resultant paucity of religious teachers made Swamiji's wish of having religious teachers all over India a failure. But he had his disciples in Calcutta, Almora, Ajmer, Madras, etc and even a few in America. He studied the French language within six months and during the exhibition

held in Paris in 1900, had delivered a lecture on Vedanta, for which he got immense appreciation from the local newspapers.

Recently, for about a year, he had been keeping unwell due to pain in his chest. Due to this, in spite of receiving invitation from Japan it was not possible for him to go there. We learn from the telegram we have received that last Friday, after returning from his usual evening stroll, his illness became acute. He called his disciple and intimated to him that he was going to give up his body. He entered into *mahasamadhi* after drawing deep breath for three times. His having attained *mahasamadhi* in the prime of his youth is a great misfortune to our country. Like our Swamiji of Akkalkota, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a full *brahmanishtha*, true. But the task of unfurling the flag of the Advaita doctrine in all the nations of the world, and to make them realize the greatness of the Hindu religion and the Hindus, and the task of establishing dharma was taken up by Swami Vivekananda only. Moreover, by his erudition, oratorical powers, enthusiasm and earnestness he laid a strong foundation for that work. All had wished and expected that a structure would be constructed on that foundation and a crown to that structure would be placed by his hands. But due to his passing away this will not be possible.

About 1200 years ago a saint not only spoke but proved what was the true form of Hindu religion; that such a religion took birth in our country was in itself our most invaluable treasure and strength; and to spread that religion all over the world was our only duty. That was Sankaracharya. And now towards the end of the nineteenth century has come the

other, Swami Vivekananda. But the work of Swami Vivekananda has still to be completed and it is our request that someone from among his disciples or somebody else should take up that task and complete it. If at all we have any important thing with us it is only our religion. Our glory, our freedom, all have been lost. But our religion is still in our hands. And that religion is not a cheap one. We have learnt from experience that the essence of this religion, even when openly put to test in advanced nations, comes out pure and triumphant. At this stage if we give it up, then like the cock of the fable [which thought that it was a jeweller and became the cause of ridicule] we too will be laughed at all the world over. This we have to bear in mind. The present times are such that, if we have any best thing with us we have to prove its capability by presenting it to the competitive business of the world. Swami Vivekananda has done this job. Had he lived for some more days, we would have got from him the fire needed to give back to this nation its nationality. To repay whatever he has done to us, it is clear that we have to assimilate the teachings given by him.

With prayers to the Lord that people may in the future gain motivation from his character, and that the credit of unifying all the different religions with the Advaita doctrine may go to our modern descendants of the *rishis*, I bring this brief life of Swami Vivekananda to a close.

After his return from America, we had invited Swamiji twice or thrice to come to Pune. But once due to his illness and then due to some other reason the people of Pune did not have the fortune of listening to Swamiji's lectures directly. □

Is God Compassionate?

'Could not God free us from ignorance at once if He wished?' asked Devamata. Swami Ramakrishnananda replied: 'Surely; but He is so infinitely loving that He does not wish to molest us. So long as He sees that we really cling to our ignorance and our desires He does not come to free us. Only when we turn all our desires to Him, then He comes and selfishness and ignorance go away.'

—from *Days in an Indian Monastery*

The Star of David

Aben was a tiny village in Judea. Green meadows surrounded it. Trees breathed fresh air of joy. The villagers lived happily. Things, however, don't remain the same. One day the news came. Queen Jezebel's henchmen were checking villages around: if anyone believed in God and not in Queen Jezebel, he or she was in danger. Everyone was afraid in this tiny hamlet. More afraid they were for Chanah. 'I have not done anything wrong. I am leading a righteous life. I fear God. So why should anyone trouble me?' asked Chanah in surprise. The village elders said, 'Old lady, remember! We are under Jezebel. She is cruel. She won't care for piety or goodness. She hates the idea of God. Her people will snatch everything away if you disobey her. Give up your God; obey her orders or there will be serious trouble. Be careful.' Chanah was puzzled. 'Children, I don't understand a word of what you all say,' she exclaimed. 'Does one who fears God, has faith in Him, and obeys His commands come to grief?' The villagers said, 'Old Chanah, God should be obeyed, all right. But before the power of evil, what can He do?'

Soon there were shouts. 'They are coming! They are coming!' The wicked henchmen had entered the village. The village elders came out and stood on the street silently. Women ran inside, dragging their children. All doors were shut. One of the elders wailed: 'Gentlemen, this village is yours. We all obey the great queen. Take whatever you need.' The leader of the queen's group, a well-built man, said, 'All right, we shall not harm you. Do you all obey the great queen?' 'We all believe only in the commands of the great queen, sir,' said one. The leader nodded happily.

The queen's people walked in leisurely. They went round the tiny village. The villagers brought out whatever eatables they could manage to appease the henchmen. But their

hunger never seemed to die! And then they came to the old lady's house. Something odd. 'Who are you?' mockingly asked one of the army. 'I am Chanah. By the name of God, I am Chanah.' That irritated the people. Infidelity! This lady thinks someone else to be superior to the great queen! 'Oh! You believe in God! Let's see what your God can do for you! Where are the taxes?' 'I pay them regularly,' she said. 'Bring out whatever you have—livestock, grains, money...' Chanah told politely, 'I told you. I pay everything regularly. At present, nothing much is left with me.' Two strongmen had entered her house by then. With one stroke one of the attackers cut one of the four posts of her house and carried it away. The other looted some other things. The ceiling sunk. 'We should have killed you; but we spare you because you are old and will die soon. If you don't obey the queen, remember, the entire village will be taken care of,' they threatened. After some time, the party left the village.

'Fortunately they are gone,' thought the elders. When they came to Chanah's place, they were surprised. The ceiling had sunk inside and the house had been vandalized. 'We told you, Chanah! Belief in God is all right, but we should be practical,' said one. Someone who was more practical said, 'What did your God do to protect you? Be practical! Elders, no one should help her. If the queen's people come to know that we help her, we shall be destroyed.' The old lady had tears in her eyes, but she remained silent. She prayed fervently. She appealed to God to protect her. Chanah was left alone. Villagers had their houses, wives and children, and their own lives to care for. How could they risk them? So the villagers thought it wise to leave the old lady all by herself.

That noon there was a storm. The village

was covered with dust, as it were. Trees shook. Houses shook. But could anything shake Chanah's faith in God? All were scared but not Chanah. This poor lady was more ardent in her prayers. The storm seemed only to increase. Why this fury? The villagers were worried. Suddenly it became clear. A mountain was coming towards the village!

'Run! Run! A mountain!' There was chaos. All ran for safety. But it was not a mountain. It was Elijah! The prophet of the desert was coming towards the village. Barefooted, skin-clad, bearded, Elijah walked solemnly towards Aben. When he entered the village, the streets were deserted. All doors were closed. But he walked straight towards Chanah's. Before Chanah could understand what was happening, Elijah had entered her broken house and had raised the roof with his hand. Instead of the post, it was Elijah now, who stood holding the roof in its place!

Hours went by. When nothing unusual seemed to happen, the villagers wished to see where Elijah had gone. Someone came to know he was at Chanah's. Slowly they all gathered there. What they saw was astounding. Chanah, with tears in her eyes, sat at the feet of the prophet while he stood silently, holding the roof with his right hand. All wondered at God's ways and praised Chanah's devotion. The day ended, night fell, stars lit the sky, but Elijah would not move. The news spread. People from neighbouring villages also came. Thousands had gathered by next morning. All sat silently at Elijah's feet. They talked to each other in low tones.

All were suffering owing to the queen's cruelty. Born in Tyre, Queen Jezebel was very treacherous. King Ahab was her slave, so to say. Ahab's passivity only increased her powers, and she wanted to be more powerful than God! Enemies were systematically eliminated. So many had been secretly murdered, so many had been rendered homeless, so many were jailed, all because of Jezebel's wanton wishes. When would this tyranny end? How could Judea be saved from Jezebel?

'Run away! The army is here!' People ran as fast as they could, shrieking with terror, to

save their lives. There was great commotion. The news of Elijah had reached the capital then! The army was here! Poor Chanah, she will be killed along with Elijah now, thought the running villagers. But no, it was the king! King Ahab, hearing the news about Elijah, had himself come. The king to a poor lady's house! The king stared at Elijah and remarked, 'So you are the prophet! You are the messenger of God!' Elijah did not say a word. 'Elijah, don't worry. I shall find out who cut away the post of this old lady's house. I shall punish him,' said the king to Elijah. In no time the post was back. And Elijah simply walked away.

The queen was enraged. 'What is this? You are the king of Judea and a wicked man in wilderness surpasses you! And you tamely let him go away! What nonsense is this! How many times have I not tried to capture the fool and failed. Send the army this time. He is hidden in the jungle of Golos. Send the army soon. Or else you will be called a useless king.' The king was hurt by her words. But he hesitated to do anything to the popular man. Jezebel would not leave it at that. She herself sent a strong army to hunt for Elijah.

In the dense forest, Elijah was talking to people about pious life, about truth, about fearing God. 'We see dust at a distance, O Elijah! There is danger, perhaps,' cried someone. Elijah stopped his discourse. He prayed to God, 'O Lord! The might of evil seems to be so powerful! The wicked seem to be so strong! Show your prowess, my Lord! Give me the arms of King David. I shall fight this puny army.' By then the army had neared. Armed soldiers had approached from all sides. There was no place to run. People wept for fear. But Elijah was not moved. He lifted his hands and cried, 'O Lord, listen to me! I am to fight this evil. Send me your weapons. With the sticks we have, we can't fight evil.'

God heard! Shining stars fell from the sky. Each stick had a star now. The brightness of it all blinded the enemy. The queen's army could not understand anything. It was terrified. It ran. And the Star of David stayed on in Israel. It is there today also! □

Book Reviews

JOSEPHINE MACLEOD AND VIVEKANANDA'S MISSION: By Linda Prugh. Published by Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600004. 1999. Pp. 544. Rs.100.

One of the signs of a great spiritual teacher is his ability to take very ordinary people, bring to light their hidden talents, and help them do extraordinary things. In fact, it is an ordinary person who often makes the best instrument for such a teacher. Swami Vivekananda was one such teacher, and Josephine MacLeod was one such instrument. Josephine MacLeod—or Tantine, as she was generally called—had little interest in education or in reading and writing, but she loved people and loved to make friends. Thus, it was through her that many well-known writers and other influential people became acquainted with Swamiji and Vedanta. And they in turn influenced hundreds of other people.

Tantine's lively, vivacious personality is well reflected in this new biography. Here the author focuses especially on Tantine's relationship with Swamiji and her influence on the spread of his message after his passing away. Tantine was, as Swamiji said, his 'good star', and did much to help him during his lifetime. She had a knack for making friends with people who could be of help to him, and with her great tact, she was able to smooth ruffled feathers when necessary. After Swamiji's passing away Tantine was constantly on the move, travelling from continent to continent. But wherever she went, she carried Swamiji's message with her. She also came frequently to India and did much to help the work of the fledgling Ramakrishna Order. Her diplomatic skills were once put to use when the British government in India became suspicious about the emphasis in Swamiji's works on being 'free from all bondages.'

Many people considered Josephine MacLeod to be eccentric, but here the author brings out very beautifully another aspect of her. Behind her whimsical 'mask' was her large and loving heart and her great generosity. Her generosity was not confined to gifts of money (sometimes given to complete strangers). She also gave a sympathetic ear when needed, or a kind word—be it to a Count or to a servant. She knew the art of listening—a rare talent in this world. Like her Master, Swamiji, she ignored people's weaknesses and emphasized their strengths. It's no wonder she had so much influence on so many people's lives.

However, a few assumptions and interpretations in this book might have been better left to the readers' judgement—particularly the interpretation of one of Swamiji's poems. There is only one 'probably' at the beginning of all that. Considering the subject matter of the poem, the interpretation is more likely 'probably not'. But the author's enthusiasm for her subject is contagious, and the reader is easily caught up in the whirlwind that was Josephine MacLeod's life. The book is well written and well researched, and readers will find it enjoyable.

*Pravrajika Shuddhatmamata
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CHĀNDOGYA UPANIṢAD: Translation with notes by Swami Lokeswarananda. Published by The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700029. 1998. Pp. 804. Rs.130.

The Upaniṣads are the solace of life for many in India and abroad. The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture is publishing the principal Upaniṣads with Sanskrit text and English translation based on the famous commentaries of Ācārya Śaṅkara. This publication is the ninth in the series; the Institute has already published *Śvetāśvatara*, *Taittirīya*, *Mundaka*, *Praśna*, *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha* and *Māṇḍūkya* Upaniṣads.

This edition is based on Swami Lokeswarananda's weekly discourses. It presents the original text in Sanskrit (both in Devanāgarī and Roman transliteration), word-to-word translation, English rendering based on Śaṅkara-bhāṣya and notes. The translation is simple, lucid and also authentic.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is a part of the *Sāma Veda* and constitutes the tenth section of the *Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa* (also known as the *Chāndogya*). The name of the Upaniṣad is derived from *chandas*, the songs of the *Sāma Veda*. Those who sing them are called *chāndogyas*.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is rated very high among the extant Upaniṣads. It is the second largest among the principal Upaniṣads (those commented on by Ācārya Śaṅkara), after the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Its language is simple but the content is profound. Hence, it is liked by ordinary people as well as highly sophisticated intellectuals. It deline-

ates the path of spiritual progress from ritualistic worship to Self-realization through the practise of *udgītha* (the recitation of Om). The first five chapters of the text pertain to rituals and *upāsana* but the last three deal with knowledge. Performance of one's own assigned duty leads to real knowledge. Karma and devotion qualify a person for the knowledge of the Absolute. This is evident in the stories of Satyakāma Jābāla and his disciple Upakosala. The famous *mahāvākya* 'tat-tvam-asi' is found in the sixth chapter of the Upaniṣad. Aruṇi Uddālaka addresses his son Śvetaketu nine times to reconfirm the identity between the individual and the Absolute. Chapter Seven of the Upaniṣad contains the dialogue between Nārada and Śaṅkumāra and pinpoints the fact that suffering cannot be removed by textual knowledge but by spiritual experience. The person who has realized his true nature can get rid of miseries (*tarati śokam ātmavid*). In Chapter Eight of the Upaniṣad, Prajāpati instructs Indra after a long training regarding the Self as Brahman.

Swami Lokeswarananda had taken up an admirable task of providing original texts of the Upaniṣads with authentic English translation. The publications are comparatively cheaper and the production comparable to international standards. This edition of the *Chāndogya* is recommended to all students of Indian philosophy.

Prof S.P. Dubey

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BREATH OF LIFE—BREATHING FOR HEALTH, VITALITY AND MEDITATION: By Swami Dharmananda Saraswati. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007. 1999. Pp. 37. Rs.45.

Regulated, deep and rhythmic breathing has now come to be a well-established component of relaxation and stress-relieving techniques. The ancient technique of *pranayama*, which till today had been practised by numerous Indians as a part of their spiritual discipline, is now being increasingly resorted to by many for its merit in boosting physical as well as mental health.

The practice of *pranayama*, though apparently easy, can actually cause harm if not done under expert guidance. In this booklet, Swami Dharmananda Saraswati has provided detailed guidelines for performing breathing and stretching exercises and *pranayama*, derived from ancient Indian and Chinese texts. The text is well illustrated and cautionary notes have been given against possible

health hazards.

The booklet can serve as a useful manual for those who have been formally initiated into the practice of these exercises.

Swami Satyaswarupananda

Belur Math

HEALING ANGER—THE POWER OF PATIENCE FROM A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE: By The Dalai Lama. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. 1997. Pp. 149. Rs.125.

This book is 'the core of the Dalai Lama's teachings on' the sixth chapter of Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, an important classic of Mahayana Buddhism. Shantideva's text is of great interest to all those who look for a succinct guide to the Buddhist middle way. As the translator rightly says, 'The impact of Shantideva's *Guide* in Tibet was perhaps unsurpassed. Ever since its translation into Tibetan in the eleventh century, the work exerted a powerful influence upon the religious life of the Tibetan people. Its pervasive influence can be found in the teachings of all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug.'

This book is a transcript of His Holiness's comments given in 1993 in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Throughout, as can be expected, the exposition is marked by directness and clarity which go hand in hand with pragmatism and provisional tentative observations. In the very beginning when a questioner raises the issue that if our nature is compassionate and gentle, then where does hatred come from, the Dalai Lama faces it squarely and does not, as idealist interpretations do, negate the negative. He says, 'Where there is consciousness, ignorance and hatred arise naturally. These negative emotions, as well as the positive emotions, occur right from the beginningless time. All these are part of our mind.'

If this appears too abstract, we have the Dalai Lama commenting on concrete examples of the Tibetan situation itself. When he was asked to describe 'what we can learn from your actions in response to the Tibetan genocide,' His Holiness is forthright. He sees the entire issue as not only one fraught with 'the danger of persons becoming habituated to extremely negative actions which in the long run cause [our] own downfall.' This is destructive on the personal level. Therefore he adds, 'a strong counter measure, taken out of compassion or a sense of concern for the other, is necessary.' Citing the specific context of the Chinese, the compassionate sage says, 'We consciously make it a point not to let our emotions overwhelm us. So even

if there is a likelihood of some feeling of anger arising, we deliberately check ourselves and try to deliberately develop a feeling of compassion towards the Chinese.'

This kind of approach, keeping in balance the norm and the practice, is the most interesting interface that marks this book. His Holiness is always wary of generalizations and invariably relates the Buddhist canon to the changing rhythms of life today. I find his comments on suffering particularly illuminating in the light of what he, in particular, and Tibetans in general had to go through. He emphasizes the need for rigorous reflection and says, 'The reason why reflection on suffering is so important is because there is a possible way out, an alternative which is the possibility of freedom from suffering.' He clinches the issue by saying that if there is 'no hope, no possibility of freedom from suffering, merely reflection on suffering would be a form of morbid thinking and quite negative.' As Shantideva would say:

As I do not become angry
With great sources of suffering such as jaundice,
Then why be angry with animate creatures?
They too are provoked by conditions.

A review can hardly do justice to the passionless good sense packed into this stimulating book. It offers both a mirror to our turbulent times and also a way out of the reflection that is terrifying to contemplate. Strongly recommended.

Dr M. Sivaramkrishna

Formerly Professor and Head

Department of English, Osmania University

AYURVEDA AND THE MIND—THE HEALING OF CONSCIOUSNESS: By David Frawley. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. 346. Rs.290.

'In the modern developed world, our problems are mainly psychological. We have adequate food, clothing and shelter which prevents us from getting most physical diseases. Yet, though most of us have no major physical problems, we still suffer from psychological unrest. This unrest may manifest as feelings of loneliness, not being loved or appreciated, anger, stress, or anxiety...our very way of life breeds unhappiness.' This seems to me the major premise behind this study of Ayurveda in the light of mind and consciousness. Perhaps the author meant this book for the affluent sections of society which do not suffer from the disease of poverty.

This is not surprising, considering the fact that David Frawley has devoted a considerable number of books to contemporise Indian systems of diverse implications, from Veda to Ayurveda. Apart from the usual remarks on Ayurveda, the more interesting aspect of the book is its concern with linking health and consciousness. As he puts it, 'Consciousness contains all knowledge, from the most mundane mechanics of the elements to the highest spiritual wisdom. Consciousness itself is the instrument of all internal forms of knowledge, transcending all knowledge gained by the senses. Awakening to the wisdom inherent in our deeper consciousness reveals to us all the mysteries of the universe. Consciousness is the source of true genius and insight.'

With this overall frame, Frawley studies the different aspects in four sections covering Ayurvedic psychology, the energetics of consciousness, the Ayurvedic therapies of the mind and their spiritual applications. Another valuable aspect of the book are the tables, and Sanskrit and herbal glossaries. While the author has summarized the Indic theories of consciousness in a lucid way, there does not seem to be anything that one does not get from standard books on consciousness which proliferate from the affluent West. Even in areas where it is possible to throw new light, the author does not seem to be keen on that. For instance, he rightly says that Ayurveda and Yoga both relate to the system of Tantra which he calls 'a complete system of human development.' But this insight is not extended so that observations like the Divine Mother and Shiva as archetypes could have been much more concretely analysed. Similarly, the chapter on 'Intelligence: The Power of Perception' begins well but hardly grapples with the entire issue in terms of contemporary theories of perception. The *pramanas* are hinted at but do not seem to receive the incisive discussion that they need.

For the general reader, probably, a more interesting and clearly presented chapter is the one on the 'Healing Power of Mantra.' There is here certain awareness of the medical implications of mantra. Though the prime mantras are clearly analysed and a suitable chart provided, these could have been linked to specific cases where healing did or does take place.

In short, the book is a clear and cogent expository and descriptive analysis of the well-known aspects of Ayurveda and consciousness. Those interested in alternative medicine will find this a very useful primer.

Dr M. Sivaramkrishna

'Let me tell you one thing, God can be seen,' says Sri Ramakrishna.

News and Reports

THE THIRD PHASE OF THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI

A special meeting convened at its Calcutta branch on 19 March 2000 (our 102nd Foundation Day) marked the opening of the third phase of the centenary celebrations of the Advaita Ashrama. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the ideal of the Ashrama and its practical application.

After Vedic chanting by the monastic members of the Ashrama, Swami Mumukshanandaji, President, welcomed the guests, speakers and the audience. Introducing the topic, he said the followers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda accept the doctrine of *shiva-jnane jiva-seva* and in varying degrees try to practise it in their day-to-day lives. They also believe in Sri Ramakrishna's teaching that Reality is both *saguna* and *nirguna*. By doing so they, perhaps even without being aware of it themselves, fully accept and follow the principles of Advaita Vedanta—the ideal of the Advaita Ashrama as set forth by



*Swamis chanting Vedic hymns at the function. (Seated from left to right)
Swami Suhitanandaji, Swami Smarananandaji and Swami Mumukshanandaji*

Swami Vivekananda. For according to many saints and scholars, no other philosophy except Advaita Vedanta regards *jiva* as Shiva. Swami Mumukshanandaji stressed that the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna ought to practise this philosophy earnestly.

Swami Suhitanandaji, an Assistant Secretary at the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Headquarters, described how the truths of Advaita Vedanta were demonstrated in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

In his chairman's address Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, pointed out that the Upanishads express Advaitic ideas in two major ways: by statements like '*neti, neti* (not this, not this)' they mean that the world, as our deceptive senses perceive it, is not real but only apparent; and by statements like '*sarvam khalvidam brahma* (verily, all this is Brahman)' they declare the same world to be nothing other than the supreme Reality itself, only from a truer point of view. Practical Advaitism is related to this second description of Reality. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology emphasizes this aspect of Advaita Vedanta which promises to spiritually elevate human society.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Swami Bodhasaranandaji, Manager of the Calcutta branch of the Advaita Ashrama.

Swami Jitatmanandaji's Chicago Visit

Sometime in August 1999 Swami Jitatmanandaji, president of our Rajkot Ashrama, received an interesting letter from Mr Lois Weisberg, Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs, Chicago Cultural Center. He was invited to attend a very special celebration—the International Millennium Dinner. To mark the arrival of the Year 2000, Mayor Richard M. Daley and the City of Chicago were inviting one person (and a companion of his or her choice) from every country in the world to their city. This unique gathering was designed to further an important goal for the new millennium: fostering greater knowledge of our world and bettering communication between its many and varied peoples.

The Consul General of India in Chicago had suggested that Swami Jitatmanandaji was an ideal person to represent his homeland at this unique event. Most certainly Mr J.C. Sharma, the Consul General, had in mind Swami Vivekananda's historic visit to Chicago. In an attempt to project the modern face of India, Mr Sharma also recommended 21-year-old Ms Tila Whista who as the Best Girl Cadet had led the NCC contingent at the prestigious Republic Day Parade in 1999.

Swami Jitatmanandaji arrived in Chicago on 28 December 1999. The highlight of his week-long stay in the city was the International Millennium Dinner at McCormick Place, Lakeside Center on 31 December 1999. Hosted by Mayor Daley, it brought each invitee together with hundreds of other international guests and a diverse group of people living in Chicago. The New Year's Eve festivity included a musical presentation specially composed for the occasion, the grand dinner with an international menu, dance, and concluded with a spectacular display of fireworks.

The entire celebration was spread over a week and aimed at developing the spirit of brotherhood, friendship, and cooperation between nations through representatives who were 'ordinary' citizens. It was a key component of the city's three-year millennium programme entitled 'Chicago: For the Time of Your Life' coordinated by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. It also gave the participants an opportunity to experience the city at its best through neighbourhood tours, visits to major attractions and interaction with city residents.

India's Gift to the World

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and, mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy and spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the nations of the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.

—Swami Vivekananda